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TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

BY

EDWARD MALTBY, B. D.

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

Cambridge,

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND,

G E O R G E,

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

THE opportunities I have had of witnessing your zeal for the promotion of Sacred Knowledge, would have induced me to prefix your name to the following work, even if I had not previously assured myself of your permission.

Your Lordship's conduct as a Prelate has been marked by a strict and discriminating inquiry into the pretensions of Candidates for Holy Orders. It has been your principle to distinguish with warm approbation those, who have applied diligently to the studies of their profession; and

a

to

to reject with impartiality such as have not duly qualified themselves for the important task of religious instruction.—Your Lordship has done still more.—Having observed the inconvenience arising from the want of a proper foundation for Theological acquirements, you devoted your time and thoughts to the composition of a Treatise, from which the student in Divinity may not only gain a general acquaintance with the subject, but also be assisted in extending his inquiries to the collateral branches of that most invaluable science.

I CAN scarcely flatter myself, my Lord, that an attempt, so humble as mine, can be materially useful in promoting the great ends, which your Lordship has so laudably kept in view. But I shall not regret the attempt I have made, if it only give me an opportunity of bearing testimony to your Lordship's exertions,

tions, and of expressing my ardent hope, that such exertions may induce the co-operation of all, whose station in the Church enables them to pursue measures equally honourable to themselves, and useful to the cause of Christianity.

I AM the more anxious to hold up your Lordship's conduct in these instances to applause and to imitation, because a sort of paradoxical distinction has been sometimes set up between sound Divines and useful Ministers—a distinction very convenient, no doubt, for those, who would deprive the Church of it's most effectual defence against the opposite, but equally fatal, extremes of Infidelity and Fanaticism. Well does it behove the appointed Guardians of our national faith to consider, by what better means they can secure it from the dangers with

which it is menaced, by an avowed contempt for all religion on the one hand, and a fantastic pretence to excessive sanctity on the other, than by encouraging an accurate and profound knowledge of the holy Scriptures among the Teachers of religion. A learned Clergy, employing their knowledge with zeal, and tempering their zeal with charity, is the best preservative, under Providence, against that ignorance and immorality, which, acting upon different intellects and different tempers, may frequently be regarded as alike productive of Scepticism and Superstition.

THAT your Lordship may enjoy a continuance of health and happiness, and be long enabled to distinguish yourself in the cause of true religion; whether it be openly assailed by the furious zeal of the Unbe-

DEDICATION.

v

Unbeliever, or secretly undermined
by the specious errors of the En-
thusiast; is, My Lord, the unfeigned
wish of

Your Lordship's

Truly Faithful,

and Obedient Servant,

EDWARD MALTBY.



17

MONTAGUE

Invited to visit him at his villa in
Italy - went to see him, & was very
impressed with his knowledge & ability

Montague

Montague

Montague

P R E F A C E.

DURING a very attentive perusal of the Books of the New Testament, I was occasionally struck with internal marks of truth; some of which, so far as my recollection went, had not been observed at all, and others did not appear to have been noticed, according to their real importance, by any writers who had fallen in my way. My conviction was gradually strengthened, in proportion as the instances which occurred to me became more numerous, and my reflection upon them more direct and intense. From time to time I committed my observations to paper, without any other view, at first, than that of preserving them for my own use. Some of them, however, furnished materials for Sermons; and as the collection insensibly increased, I began at length to consider them as not wholly unworthy of public attention.

To the Public therefore I now commit them with the earnest hope, that the rectitude

titude of my intention, and my reverential sense of the importance which belongs to subjects of Religion, will atone for those deficiencies, which, I am well aware, may be discovered by readers of more extensive erudition, and more profound research. In excuse for some appearances of haste or forgetfulness, I may plead incessant and, I hope, useful occupation in matters not always congenial with an early and habitual fondness for Literature. Surely I may flatter myself, without the imputation of extravagant vanity, that the execution of this work would have been less imperfect, if the various and urgent duties of my profession and situation had allowed me either to think, or to revise my thoughts, with fewer interruptions.

IT is however a source of considerable gratification to me, that many defects, which might have arisen from my own want of information or want of leisure, have been supplied by the superior knowledge and discernment of the friends, whom I occasionally consulted. Among these is a Man, whose name I am not at liberty to mention in this Preface, but to whose worth I do no more than justice, when I speak of him in the

the words, which Olivet employed to describe the character of Francis Odin. *Homo est antiquis imbutus perinde studiis ac moribus. Quem juvenis ut magistrum colui: grandior habui devinctum arctissimâ necessitudine, et habebo semper**.

I BEG leave most respectfully to offer my acknowledgments to the Syndics of the University pres, for the readiness and liberality, with which they consented to defray the expense of this publication. I have only to express my humble and unfeigned hope, that, by promoting in some degree a more effectual belief in the evidences of Revealed Religion, this Volume may be found not entirely undeserving of the protection, which they have afforded it.

* *Præfat. ad Cic. Opp. p. 21. Amstel. 1745.*

*Vicarage House,
Buckden,
Oct. 30. 1801.*



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Brief statement of external evidence.—Particular inquiry into the proof arising from internal marks.—
1. *Style and idiom.—2. Minuteness of detail.—*
3. *Absence of all party spirit.—4. Candour of the writers, in relating their own failings.—*
5. *Agreement of the facts with the supposition of a miraculous interference.—6. Uniform preservation of character.—7. Various proofs, arising from a comparison of the genuine Scriptures with the Apocryphal Books.*

pp. 1—67.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PROOF ARISING FROM THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE JEWS.

Peculiarities in the character of the Jewish people.—Prophecies concerning the Messiah.—Expectations formed in consequence of them.—Appearance of false prophets.—In what manner Jesus appeared, in the character of the expected Messiah.—His conduct and doctrine.—Gospel, how preached after his death.—The Christian religion not founded in imposition, or enthusiasm.—The actions of Jesus con-

Considered with reference to each of these suppositions.—Jewish zealots.—Inference from the foregoing facts.—Recapitulation. pp. 68—116.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES.

How far the Disciples resembled their countrymen.—Who they were.—Address of Jesus to them, after they were chosen.—Their ignorance of their Master's real office, and distrust of his power.—Conduct at the transfiguration.—Disposition to interpret the prophecies literally.—Candid representation of their own conduct, a proof of their veracity.—Disputes who should be the greatest.—Triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.—The last supper.—The garden.—Apprehension of Jesus.—Sentiments and conduct of the disciples at that event.—Circumstances attending the resurrection.—Disciples, at length convinced, boldly preach a crucified Messiah.—How this change is to be accounted for.—Some remnant of their old prejudices and mistakes.—Conversion of Cornelius.—Reflections upon that event.—Edict of the council at Jerusalem.—Conclusion warranted by these facts, and others harmonizing with them. pp. 117—162.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE DISCIPLES DURING THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

*Introduction and division of the subject.—1st, proofs from Scripture, that this power was conferred—
and*

and 2dly, actually exercised.—3dly, The purpose for which it was bestowed.—Lastly, the effects it produced on the minds of the Apostles.—One instance against the exercise of this power examined.—Reasons assigned for it.—Further reflections upon the subject.—Uniformity of the divine dispensations.—Result of this inquiry favourable to the truth of our Holy Religion.—Vindication of the Apostles' character. pp. 163—202.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE SCHEME OF THE GOSPEL.

Difference, between the mode and extent of Christ's preaching and that of the Apostles, stated.—made the ground of an objection by infidels.—Design of the Gospel.—offered to the Jews first,—but intended from the first to comprehend the Gentiles.—Various proofs of this intention.—Rejection of it by the Jews foretold by our Lord, as well as the destruction of the Jewish polity.—Disciples acted in conformity with the views and directions of their Master.—If they had made any alteration, it would have been of a very different kind from that imputed to them.—No motive can be assigned for their conduct in this particular, but their well-grounded confidence in the pretensions of Jesus to the title of Messiah.—Improbabilities of any other supposition. pp. 203—232.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

Malignity and extent of the charge, urged by unbelievers against the Christian Religion.—Particularly as it affects the character of Jesus.—An objection

objection against producing the testimony of his friends obviated.—Concessions of his adversaries upon this point.—Vanini.—Chubb.—Bolingbroke.—Rousseau.—Voltaire.—Paine.—Gibbon.—Lequinio.—What the intentions of Jesus must have been, according to the assumptions of his enemies.—Their own concessions shewn to be at variance with these assumptions.—Different grounds of argument, taken by unbelievers, examined.—The imputation of imposture shewn to be inconsistent with the character of the virtues, which they allow him to have possessed.—Near inspection, to which the conduct of our Lord was subjected.—Yet no instance of any deviation from moral rectitude.—Compared with Minos.—Numa.—Lycurgus.—Mahomet.—The scheme of Jesus, if founded in fraud, less excusable than those of these acknowledged deceivers.—Consequently not imputable to one of his good character.—Inquiry whether he could have been actuated by any good motive to assume false pretensions,—answered in the negative.

pp. 233—284.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GODWIN'S MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE CHARACTER OF IT'S FOUNDER EXAMINED.

Passage from Mr. Godwin's Enquirer quoted.—The charges, contained in it, reduced to three heads.—1. That bigotry and intolerance are encouraged by the Christian religion.—2. That an improper stress is laid upon faith.—3. That there are certain moral defects in the character and temper of Jesus Christ.—Each of these charges examined separately—and confuted, partly by historical documents

ments—partly by a critical inquiry into the texts, Mark xvi. 16. Math. xxiii. 33.—This writer shewn to have misunderstood or perverted them.—A fair deduction made, from the subjects of the preceding inquiry, in favour of Christianity. pp: 285—325.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIEW OF THE DEFECTS OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE MAHOMETAN RELI- GION.

Connection of the proposed inquiry with the design of this work.—Situation of the Roman and Persian Empires.—Genius and temper of the Arabs.—Illustrious descent of the Impostor.—Protected by his uncle, the Prince of Mecca.—Advantageous marriage—Qualifications of mind and body.—Conceives the design of establishing a new religion.—Slow progress of this design.—Danger.—Flight to Medina.—Assumption of temporal power.—Inducements to his followers.—Plunder.—Paradise.—Predestination.—Success in his wars.—Fanaticism of his followers accounted for.—Objects of worship changed, but modes of worship retained.—Doctrine of one supreme God not new in Arabia.—No change in moral habits.—Sensual pleasures allowed.—Koran.—Extravagant claims in favour of it refuted.—Deficiency of internal and external evidence.—Death of the impostor.—Appeal to infidels on behalf of our holy Religion. pp. 326—367.

THESES.

T H E S I S.

Nequit per se humana ratio cognitione satis plenā et certā assequi, quo potissimum modo Deus sit colendus, quæ sint hominum officia, vita denique futura sit, nēcne, æterna. pp. 370—407.

CONCIO AD CLERUM.

JUDIC. XI. COMM. 39.

Expletisque duobus mensibus, reversa est ad patrem suum: et fecit ei sicut voverat, quæ ignorabat virum. pag. 409.

CORRIGENDA.

Page. 40. l. 25. for simply *r.* merely.

48. l. 9. *r.* *μετά.*

60. not. l. 22. *r.* p. 36.

61. l. 10. *r.* their own names.

95. l. 13. *r.* or at least.

98. l. penult. *r.* supposition.

99. l. 22. for them *r.* him.

109. l. 1. for sense *r.* meaning.

200. l. 21, 22. } put a comma after testimony, dele semi-
201. l. 1. } colon after censure, and place it after
 } inconsistency.

241. l. 5. after just, put a colon.

271. l. 17. before scruple, insert less.

299. l. 7. for enforcing *r.* producing.

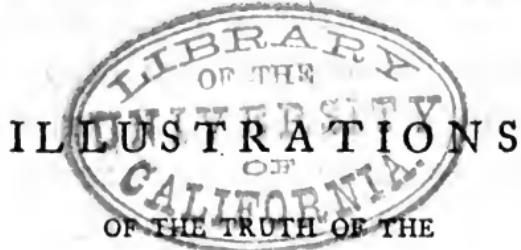
312. not. l. penult. *r.* חַדְשָׁה

346. l. 15. *r.* allured.

374. l. penult. see the note in p. 375.

405. l. 3. *r.* jactitaverint.

429. l. 1. *r.* fibi.



CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Brief statement of external evidence.—Particular enquiry into the proof arising from internal marks.—1. Style and idiom.—2. Minuteness of detail.—3. Absence of all party spirit.—4. Candour of the Writers, in relating their own failings.—5. Agreement of the facts, with the supposition of a miraculous interference.—6. Uniform preservation of character.—7. Various proofs, arising from a comparison of the genuine Scriptures with the Apocryphal Books.

THE same mode of reasoning, by which the compositions of any profane author, are proved to be genuine and authentic*, may be applied to the writings of the Evangelists

* "It may be of use," says Bishop Watson in his masterly *Apology for the Bible*, "to state, distinctly, the difference between the genuineness, and the authenticity of a book. A genuine book, is that which was written by the person whose name

geliſts and Apostles with additional force. No books whatſoever have been quoted ſo frequently, or by ſuch an uninterrupted ſeries of ſucceſſive authors, ſince their firſt appearance: nor are Manuscripts extant of the works of any other Writer, equal in number and in antiquity, to thoſe of the diſferent books of the New Testament.

This argument cannot be contested without overthrowing the foundation of all historical testimony, without bringing into diſpute the claim of every antient writer to the works which paſs under his name. Such a proof then ought to be decisive; and every addition to it may ſeem unnecessary. Yet as it is the property of truth, to admit the clofeſt inspection without any diminution of its beauty; and as every question of importance ſhould be placed in the moſt varied lights under which it can be viewed, it may not be improper nor uſeless to conſider the internal proofs, which the canonical writings of the New Testament afford to their own genuineness and authenticity.

IN

name it bears, as the author of it. An authentic book, is that which relates matters of fact, as they really happened." p. 33. See Michaelis, Chapter 2. particularly p. 24, &c. I refer of course to the edition by Marsh, which is every way worthy of the original, and truly an honour to the Biblical Literature of this country,

IN the first place, the style and language of these books supply strong indications, that they were written about the time, and by the sort of men, to which they are ascribed. This argument will undoubtedly be convincing in proportion to the knowledge the reader has of the original languages, to which the writers were accustomed, those, in which they thought and wrote: but even they, who are not possessed of this information, may be satisfied by the concurring testimony of the best judges upon this head.

THE style of these volumes is very different from that which is used by the native Greek authors *; the classical writers as they are called.

* Any tolerable judge of the Greek language, who examines with attention a page of the New Testament, cannot fail to remark certain peculiarities of expression; and if he refers to commentators of the most critical discernment and extensive reading in the Oriental tongues, he will discover whence many of these peculiarities flow. That the air and form of these expressions is derived from the religious sentiments and associations of the Jews, and the revolutions which their language underwent prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, he will be satisfied, if he will peruse the concessions of Salmasius in his elaborate treatise de Hellenisticâ, the learned disquisitions of Michaelis, part 1. capp. 4. and 5. and above all, the judicious remarks of Dr. Campbell, Dissertation 1. part 1. Diff. II. p. 2. and preface to Matthew's Gospel.

Ernesti also has treated this subject, with his usual learning and judgement, in his *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti*, p. 1. sect. 2. c. 3. An edition of this invaluable little treatise has been published lately by Ammon, which I should be happy to see printed in England.

called. Nor is the difference confined to single words, but it is apparent in the combination of phrases, in the structure of periods, and in the want as well as redundancy of some, and in the misapplication of other,
con-

It may be here observed, that the clearest light is thrown upon the meaning of the Greek Testament, not by those commentators and lexicographers, who have confined themselves to the pure native Greek authors; but by those, who have combined the study of Greek with a profound knowledge of the Oriental languages. Thus in investigating the precise import of any single word, recourse should not be had to Stephens, or Damm, or even Budæus, so much as to Schwartz, Schoettgenius, and Schleusner.—And of the professed commentators it may, I think, with truth be asserted, that Lightfoot and Schoettgenius, who have confined themselves almost entirely to the Rabbinical writings, throw more light upon the language and the allusions of the sacred volumes, than almost all other commentators whatsoever.—Having examined their annotations upon the ten first chapters of St. Matthew, with a view to determine in some degree the quantity of assistance afforded to the readers of that Gospel, I reckoned up more than one hundred passages in which their labours have been materially useful.

Upon the subject of the foregoing note, I would more particularly refer the reader to pp. 120.—123. and 142. of Salmasius, to pp. 111. 135. 139. 155. 179. of Michaelis, and to pp. 16.—22. of Dr. Campbell's first vol. as well as to the explanations he has given of some words of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, in *Dissertations V. VI. VII. IX.* A judicious account of the style of the New Testament may be also found in Father Simon's *Critical History*, part 2. c. 26.—28. The English reader may consult the instances produced in Collyer's *Sacred Interpreter*, Vol. I. p. 75.—91. Dr. Jennings has also noticed many of these peculiarities in his *Jewish Antiquities*, Vol. I. pp. 112.—121. which is rather remarkable, as he speaks with so much complacency of the hypothesis of Pfochenius and Blackwall, the erroneousness of which is so apparent, that it needed not the complete refutation it has received from Dr. Campbell.



connective particles*, upon the proper use of which the purity and elegance of the Greek language greatly depends.

IN the historical books, as well as in the Epistles, but particularly in the former, traces are to be discerned in every page, (I might almost say, in every sentence) of a manner of thinking and of expression, very consonant with the opinions and the practices of the inhabitants of Judæa. The vernacular language of the Jews, at the period to which these writings are usually referred, has been termed by Jerome, and with some propriety, Syro-Chaldaic †. It is not indeed entirely Chaldee, the language to which the Israelites were accustomed in their captivity; nor is it pure Syriac, the language of the inhabitants of the neighbouring country; but it is a mixture of both, with a strong tincture of

* See the facts completely ascertained by Michaelis, pp. 123, 125. and the cause investigated, p. 114.

† See Campbell, Vol. II. p. 16. and 20.—24. Michaelis with geographical precision says, “The language spoken in common life by the Jews in Palestine was that, which may very properly be called Aramæan, those of Jerusalem and Judæa speaking the East-Aramæan or Chaldee, and those of Galilee the West-Aramæan or Syriac, two dialects that differed rather in pronunciation than in words.” p. 135. Cùm Hebraicam dico (says Salmasius) eam ipsam intelligo quæ tum sic vocabatur, quamvis Syriacum potius esset idioma ab antiquâ Hebraicâ multum diversum. Epist. Dedicat. p. 28.

of the old Hebrew idiom*. There are moreover evident marks in these volumes of the change, which the Macedonian† conquests introduced into the language of the conquered countries; and there is a variety not only of Latin phrases, but of Latin words‡ incorporated, and as it were domiciliated, into the vernacular tongue. In this last particular, the style of the New Testament is found to differ from that of the Septuagint version, which is much more free, if not || entirely so, from any mixture of Latin phraseology or idiom. So that, although these different collections of writings are composed in the same kind of Greek, which has been termed the Hellenistic dialect §, but is indeed

more

* For the name "Hebrew" consult Campbell, Vol. I. p. 3. II. p. 17. and 20. for the retention of the "idioms" Vol. I. p. 48.

† These conquests produced what was called the Alexandrine idiom, traces of which are found in the New Testament. See Salmasius, pp. 95. 102. 264. and 442 — 447. Michaelis has devoted a section, the seventh of Chap. 4. to this subject.

‡ Salmas. pp. 94. 121.—123. 140. Mich. ib. sect. X.

|| In Novo (sc. Testamento) multæ voces Romanæ, multæ phrases Latinae occurunt, quæ nusquam in vetere comparent. Salmas. p. 251.

§ The dispute between some eminent scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries concerning this appellation is well known. The controversy certainly turned too much upon names, yet it had its use, since it brought forward much curious criticism upon the language of the New Testament. I must confess, I think Salmasius has made out his point as to the impropriety of both the terms, which were first adopted by Scaliger

more properly the Greek of the Synagogue, still there is this marked distinction between them; which shews that the one must have been written, after the Macedonians had obtained a considerable influence over the affairs of Judea, while the other bears evident

Scaliger and Drusius. (Vid. Ernesti Interpr. N. T. p. 1. f. 2. c. 3. f. 16.) Yet he has carried his argument much too far, in supposing the Apostles to have been entirely unacquainted with the Greek language, and with the Septuagint Version. With regard to the Ἑλλήσται mentioned in the A&ts, I am not quite satisfied that he is wrong. Upon the whole however, I am disposed to acquiesce in the determination of Harles. “Si quis aut nationem, quæ usa fuisset peculiari græco dicendi genere, aut peculiarem græcam dialectum intelligit, eamque hellenisticam vocat, tunc nego, linguam esse hellenisticam. Contrà, si quis illam dicendi rationem ex lingua hebraicâ et græcâ mixtam, quæ Judæis inter Ἑλληνας viventibus ab educatione, consuetudine, usuque tam hebraici codicis, quam versionis τῶν LXX. propria quasi fuit et vulgaris, Hellenisticam dixerit, equidem non adeò dissentirem. Introductio in Hist. Ling. Gr. Tom. II. pars 2. p. 69. Altenburgi 1795.

See Campb. Vol. I. p. 12. and 23. Simon argues that Salmasius contended about words.—He has replied to this objection in the Dedication prefixed to his Commentarius, pp. 31. and 50. I am not so fortunate as to possess his other treatise on this subject, which I suppose he thought conclusive, since he gave it the title of Funus Linguæ Hellenisticæ. It may be worth while, before we quit the subject, to see what appellation he is willing to bestow upon this peculiar style. “Concludanius igitur non Hellenisticum fuisse stilum Novi Testamenti, sed partim idioticum Syriacum, partim ἑρμηνευτικόν. Nam Syria smos ex utroque habet, sed præcipue ex versionis genere. Phrasium autem rationem nihil facere ad idiomatum differentiam constituendam jam supra docuimus. Veteris Testamenti dictio partim etiam ἑρμηνευτικὴ, quod eloquitionem spectat, ex Hebræo ad verbum expressam, partim Macedonica propter Macedonum in Ægypto et Syriâ sub Alexandri successoribus firmatum imperium.” p. 264.

dent tokens of the prevalence of the Roman arms. The historical facts, mentioned and alluded to in various parts of the New Testament, will not admit any reasonable doubt, but that the books must have been written after the accession of Tiberius to the Empire; but even if this were not the case, these internal marks would shew, that the Romans had established themselves in that part of the world, sufficiently to have effected a considerable change in the language of the inhabitants. On the other hand, as Michaelis observes, "The Hebraisms and Syriaisms, with which these writings abound, shew them to have been written by men of Hebrew origin." He justly concludes from this fact, that they were productions of the first century; "since after the decease of the Jewish converts to Christianity, we find hardly any instance of Jews who turned preachers of the Gospel; and the Christian fathers were for the most part totally ignorant of Hebrew *."

WITH respect to the character and condition of the writers, we are justified in concluding, from the resemblance to the phraseology of the old Testament, and to the style

style of the Septuagint Version *, from the introduction of Syriac and Chaldaic modes of expression, and from the thorough knowledge which these volumes exhibit of Jewish customs and writings, not only that the writers were extremely conversant with the language of Palestine, but also that they were Jews by religion ; since none but Jews were likely to attain such an insight into all that concerns Jewish laws and opinions, or could be enabled to produce compositions, similar, in so many marked peculiarities, to the Rabbinical and Talmudical writings †.

THERE

* Salmasius contends against all probability, that the Apostles never used the Septuagint version, p. 252. Ernesti maintains that they never quoted it (Vid. Michaelis, Vol. I. p. 231.) which is not only a different question, but one more difficult of solution.—No impartial judge will deny, that there is a strong and frequent resemblance between the Greek of the LXX. and the New Testament. Indeed what Salmasius says of the former in another place, is equally applicable to the latter. *Quocunque nomine vocari placeat eam eloquutionem, quâ concepta est Septuaginta Interpretum editio, certum esse, eam plures Hebraismos et Syriaismos intertextos Græcæ orationis corpori, quasi notas ac nævos peculiares, ostentare.* Ep. Dedic. p. 31. It is true, he puts this remark into the mouth of his opponent, yet he elsewhere allows its accuracy, see p. 34. *Nam de re semper inter omnes constitit, verba esse Græca, phrasim Hebraicam,* p. 50. See also Campb. Vol. I. pp. 10, 11.

† On the great assistance to be derived from these sources towards the more accurate interpretation of the New Testament, see what has been said before of Lightfoot and Schoettgenius. See also Michaelis, pp. 129. 182. and the testimony of Surenhusius, in his preface to the *Horæ Hebraicæ and Talmudicæ*

THERE is moreover another strong argument for the authenticity of these writings, the force of which will be acknowledged by the accurate observers of language. Very many of the Greek words found in the New Testament, are not such as were adopted by men of education, and the higher and more polished ranks of life, but such as were in use with the common* people. Now this shews, that

mudicæ of Schoettgenius, sect. 4. In the same preface, an objection to the supposed want of antiquity in these writings is successfully encountered. See sect. 13. and 14.

* No critic seems to have taken more pains in pointing out the qualities of this vulgar idiom (this *χυδαιότης*, or *χυδαιολογία*, as it is styled) and in marking the instances, which occur in the New Testament than Salmasius. See his treatise De Hellenisticâ, pp. 95—113. He discriminates the *ἰδιωτικὸς χαρακτὴρ* p. 128. See also pp. 144. 250. 254, and 260. Simon in c. 28. ad fin. and Campbell, Diff. I. agree with Salmasius as to this fact, and they produce in corroboration of it a variety of passages, equally strong and apposite, from Origen and Chrysostom.

With respect to the charge of *obscurity*, which Simon has taken occasion from this circumstance to urge against the language of the New Testament, see Salmasius, p. 131. and Ernesti, loc. sup. cit. sect. 14. and 15. Certain it is, that the *common* language would be best understood by those to whom Christianity was first taught, and by the teachers themselves. Michaelis seems too much afraid of making any concessions on the subject of this idiomatic language pp. 156. 171. Yet he more than once wishes for the assistance of antient inscriptions, solely with a view to the explanation of the provincialisms and idiotisms. See pp. 170. and 176. Perhaps this eminent critic would not have taken the alarm, which he seems to have done, if he had been aware of the judicious distinction made by our learned countryman. “It is pertinent, however, to observe that the above remarks on the Greek of the New Testament, do not imply that there was any

that the writers became acquainted with the language in consequence of an actual intercourse with those who spoke it, rather than from any study of books: and that intercourse must have been very much confined to the middling, or even lower classes, since the words and phrases, most frequently used by them, passed current only among the vulgar. There are undoubtedly many plain intimations* given throughout these books,

that

any thing, which could be called idiomatical or vulgar in the language of our Lord himself, who taught always in his mother tongue. His Apostles and Evangelists, on the contrary, who wrote in Greek, were, in writing, obliged to translate the instructions received from him into a foreign language of a very different structure, and for the use of people accustomed to a peculiar idiom. The apparently respectful manner in which our Saviour was accosted by all ranks of his countrymen, and in which they spoke of his teaching, shews that he was universally considered as a person of eminent knowledge and abilities. It was the amazing success of his discourses to the people, in commanding the attention and reverence of all who heard him, which first awaked the jealousy of the Scribes and Pharisees.” Campbell, Vol. I. p. 23.

It may be proper to state that in the year 1767, a work was published at Naples with the following title. Dominici Diodati J. C. Neapolitani de Christo Græcè loquente Exercitatio, quâ ostenditur, Græcam, sive Hellenisticam linguam cùm Judæis omnibus, tûm ipsi ad eò Christo Domino et Apostolis, nativam, ac vernaculam fuisse. It is written, as I am told by a learned friend, with acuteness rather than erudition, and contains no argument of real weight against the generally received opinion of scholars.

* It is obvious to cite such passages as Mark i. 16. ii. 14. John xxi. 3. 7. where the occupations of the Apostles are plainly and professedly mentioned. It may be more satisfactory

that the writers were of this lower class, and that their associates were frequently of the same description; but the character of the style is the strongest confirmation possible, that their conditions were not higher, than what they have ascribed to themselves.

WHAT is the inference from these facts? That the books of the New Testament were written exactly at the time, in which they are supposed to have been written, and by the very persons, to whom they are ascribed? By no means. No internal marks perhaps could supply a proof of such accuracy as this. But they shew that they were written near the time, to which they were attributed; and by persons similarly situated in religion, language, and condition, to those, whose works they are asserted to be. So that the internal marks, those characters which cannot be feigned, are so far from contradicting the pretensions of the writers, that they even supply a powerful argument in their favour. "It cannot be concluded (says Michaelis

very
tory to refer to Acts iii. 6. xviii. 3. xx. 34. 2 Cor. ch. viii.
and ix. xi. 6, 8, 9, 27. xii 14, &c. Phil. ii. 25. iv. 10, &c.
1 Thess. ii. 6, 9. 2 Thess. iii. 8, 10, 11. Philem. 11, 18.
In these, the attainments, occupations and associates of the first
preachers of the Gospel are indirectly mentioned and alluded
to, and afford a species of *undesigned* proof, which seems to repel
the imputation of fraud, especially if the circumstance of style
be taken into the account.

very justly) from these premises alone, that the sacred books of the New Testament were written by those particular persons to whom they are ascribed, but only that they were composed either by native Jews, or by persons, who, by continual intercourse with that nation, had insensibly adopted the Jewish style. It follows therefore, from what has been said above, that they were written before the year 120, a conclusion sufficient to answer our present purpose, when applied to the books of undoubted authority *.”

SECONDLY, The remarkable minuteness and precision, with which the incidents and conversations are recorded in the historical books, suit the character, and justify the pretensions, of the authors, as having been eye-witnesses, or as having derived their information from eye-witnesses. Not only are the time and place of many transactions described with uncommon exactness †, but

the

* “τὰ ὁμολογήμενα.” p. 47.

† John vi. 10. “Now there was much grass in the place.” Surely that is the observation of an eye-witness.—Mark ix. 3. The description of the transfiguration is so striking, that it increases the probability of Mark’s Gospel being written under the direction of St. Peter.—Observe the incident in c. xiv. 51, 52. Who was this *πανίσχος*? could it be Mark himself? I beg also to refer the reader to the following passages, which appear to me to bear evident marks of being written by persons well acquainted with the facts, which they

the names of individuals* are particularly mentioned; and this too, when the writers do not affect precision, as to the order of occurrences, but professedly relate events, as they suggested themselves to the memory, or appeared to be more peculiarly worth recording.

It is the practice of impostors, with the pretence of accuracy, to avoid entering into particulars, and to carry away their readers by enlarging upon general topics: those, who write with the minuteness of the sacred historians, can do it only in the conviction, that they are describing real incidents.— From this it follows, that the transactions, must have occurred somewhere about the time

they have undertaken to record. Mark v. 25. viii. 14. x. 50. xiv. 5. Luke viii. 42, 51. ix. 28. xix. 3, 4. xxii. 59. xxiv. 42. John vi. 22, 23. xviii. 26. xix. 39. xx. 3, 7. xxi. 11, &c. The enumeration of circumstances so minute with respect to time, age, place, quantity, gesture, &c. carries along with it a sort of calm, but satisfactory evidence, in which the mind acquiesces more readily, in proportion as it examines more attentively. To the foregoing passages add Mark xiv. 54. and the parallel places, Luke xxii. 55. John xviii. 18. The intenseness of the cold during the *night* in Judea, about the time of the vernal equinox, is sufficiently proved by the concurring evidence of travellers. See Shaw's Travels, folio, pp. 362. 377. 379. Maundrell complains of the severity of the dews in the night of March 22. See his Journey, p. 57. 6th Edit. The crucifixion, according to Ferguson, took place April 3rd in the last year of the 202d Olympiad. See his Astronomy, 4to. p. 194.

* Mark v. 22. x. 46. xv. 21, 40, 43. Luke xxiii. 26. John xviii. 10. Acts ix. 36. x. 1, 32. xiii. 1, 6, 7.

time they are related to have happened, and the histories must also have been written not long after: since Jerusalem was destroyed, the inhabitants slain or carried away, and the whole country made desolate, about 40 years after the death of Jesus: and as no opportunity was afterwards afforded for observing any thing similar, so no temptation could be presented for laying the scene of such incidents in that country.

THIRDLY, These writings are not infected with the slightest tincture of party spirit. If the authors had been prompted to compose and publish these histories with any sinister intention, their object would have been to exalt the character of Jesus and his followers, and to degrade and vilify their adversaries. Splendid eulogia upon the one, and pointed censures of the other, would have been studiously introduced. Instead of which, not the slightest attempt at panegyric, nor the least degree of misrepresentation is observable. A plain tale is told artlessly and abruptly. The character of Jesus is rendered prominent by a simple detail of his actions; and the proceedings of his enemies are set forth in the usual manner of historical narrative, without offensive imputations

imputations or epithets, or any attempt* to prepossess the reader against them. Objections to the doctrine† and conduct of Christ are accurately stated: and the only solicitude of the writers, if any be manifest, is to tell concisely, but faithfully, some interesting passages in his life and history.

FOURTHLY, The utmost candour and honesty are observable in recording their own errors and failings. They expose, without scruple, the bigotry ‡, the incapacity, the cowardice, the disingenuousness, the inconsistency of the disciples, that is, of themselves and their partizans. The doubts § they entertained concerning the conduct and pretensions of their Master, their jealousy of each other, the ambition of James and John,

the

* A striking instance of the candour of the Evangelists is given by Michaelis, p. 64. Every impartial reader cannot fail to remark the pains they have taken to do justice to the attempts made by Pilate, in order to save the life of Jesus. See Dr. White's *Diateffaron*, pp. 275—282.

† Matth. ix. 3, 34. xi. 3. xii. 2, 24. xiii. 54, &c. xxvii. 42, 63. xxviii. 13. Mark iii. 21, 22. Luke vii. 34, 39. xi. 38. xix. 7. John vii. 5, 12, 15, 20. x. 20.

‡ This subject, which is connected with what immediately follows, will be opened more fully in the third chapter. I shall content myself at present with referring to distinct passages in proof of each assertion, and in the order in which they here stand. Vide Luke ix. 54. Acts iv. 13. Mark xiv. 50. Galatians ii. 11. Mark viii. 14—21.

§ For proofs of these assertions, see Matth. xvii. 20. Luke ix. 46. Matth. xx. 20. Luke xxii. 61. and Galatians, ubi supra. John xx. 25. Acts xv. 39.

the apostacy and dissimulation of Peter, the incredulity of Thomas, the dispute between Paul and Barnabas, are recorded with an air of impartiality and integrity, which baffles suspicion, and invites the strictest confidence.

FIFTHLY, The history that is contained in the Gospels, and in the Acts, extraordinary as it is, and exhibiting the different, and even opposite, conduct of the same men at different times, is perfectly consistent in all it's parts, if we admit the basis upon which that history rests. But if we discredit the miraculous part of the history, it will be equally impossible, to assign a reason why such a story should have been so invented; and to reconcile with any known principles of human action the conduct of the agents. The miracles* are so connected with the narrative, that if we reject the belief of them, it will be extremely difficult to find arguments of sufficient force to convince us that Jesus claimed the title of the Messiah,
and

* An observation of similar import, made by Lord Bellingbroke with respect to the Old Testament, is applied to an excellent purpose by the Bishop of Lincoln, in his Elements of Christian Theology, Vol. I. p. 50.

and that any were found among the Jews to admit his pretensions.

SIXTHLY, Another mark of truth discernible in the writings of the sacred historians, is the exact preservation of character; whether the marks of identity be traced in the actions and discourses of the same individual, in the various occasions upon which he is introduced; or whether the features of the different actors, as delineated by these writers, correspond with the lineaments of the same persons, as they are preserved in undoubted sources of information.

IT has ever been considered as a requisite, in fictitious compositions*, that the characters should not only have the distinguishing marks of the peculiar situation, and circumstances, in which they are supposed to be placed, but that a consistency should be strictly observed throughout the same character; and if the person thus represented, be brought from real life, it is invariably required, that he should bear some visible marks of those qualities, which history or fame has already assigned him. This is absolutely

* Horat. Art. Poet. vv. 105. 112. 119. 126. 156, &c. See also Aristot. Rhetor. b. ii, c. 12.

solutely necessary in order to render fiction probable.—And the nearer the approach is made to these previous requisites, the more is the merit of the writer enhanced, and the interest of the composition heightened. Now certainly, the qualities that are necessary to render a professed fiction probable, are indispensably required to make that, which professes to record real transactions authentic. And as a deficiency in those qualifications would detract from the credibility of any narrative, so the exact adherence to them, under circumstances, where it is highly improbable, that the art or invention of the writer could have supplied these marks of truth, must in a great degree, if not decisively, confirm it's claim to the title of true history.

IT is scarcely possible to conceive a wider compass of subject, and consequently one more unfavourable to the genius of fiction, than what is comprehended in the historical writings of the New Testament. Not only are Jews introduced of various ranks and ages, from the chiefs of the Sanhedrim, the expounders of the law, and the leaders of the sects, to the humble fishermen, the companions of Jesus, and even to characters still

lower, those whom the contagion of disease, or the scandal of their vices had driven from the comforts of social life; but we also hear the discourses, and observe the actions, of heathens, widely differing from each other in the qualities of their hearts, in the endowments of the mind, in condition and in occupation.—Nor is the scene confined to a single nation or country, but we are transported from Jerusalem to Athens, from the residence of those, who cultivated no other knowledge than that of their own law and traditions, to the centre of heathen learning and taste, and of heathen superstition too and idolatry. From Athens, and from Corinth, and from Ephesus, the seats of every improvement in the arts of civilized life, we are conveyed to the rude and uncivilized barbarians on the shores of Melita*. By sea and by land we accompany the adventurous voyagers, amidst scenes, in which they appear to the astonished spectators, as gods descended from heaven—or when they seem to the deluded multitude,

as

* I accede to the opinion of the learned Mr. Bryant, and Ignatius Georgius, that the island, on which St. Paul was shipwrecked, was Melite Illyrica: though I am aware, that the contrary hypothesis has been maintained with great ability by Walchius, in his Commentary *De Deo Melitensium*, published at Jena 1753.

as the fanatic enemies of religion—still, in the characters of the chief actors, we observe a consistency and identity, which attests the reality of the representation; while those, with whom they converse, and who are introduced but incidentally, bear the traces of that national and individual resemblance, which the records of history have invariably assigned them.

THE grand exemplification of the preceding remarks, is to be noticed in the character of our Lord himself, which is at once so peculiar, that it could scarcely be copied, yet so natural, that it could not be feigned. In the very minute delineation of his actions and sentiments, we cannot fail to trace one and the same dignified, and virtuous, and benevolent Being. In the various, and seemingly opposite, excellencies which are pourtrayed, of dignity and of humility, of just resentment and of submissive patience, of fortitude and meekness, not once do we discover any marks of inconsistency, not one action or one word do we remark, that does not seem appropriate to the new and sublime pretensions of the Son of God. In those of the disciples, who come more particularly forward to observation, each individual is distinguished

distinguished by some peculiarity of manner, yet that manner is invariably and exactly preserved. The characters of St. Paul and St. Peter are both marked by a warmth and eagerness of disposition, yet they are so represented, as to appear each possessed of his own discriminating qualities. In both we observe indelible traces of a peculiar conformation of temper and of habits, yet the actions of the one are not liable to be mistaken for those of the other. In St. Paul we see an ardent inflexible zeal; knowing no fear, and defying every danger, when pursuing what his conviction pronounced to be truth. In him too we discover intellectual powers of a more than ordinary size, —fervid, full, and comprehensive. In St. Peter's conduct plain traces of a ready impetuous zeal are discernible; but it is a zeal mixed with a degree of timorous selfishness, and more easily bent from its purpose, than that of his fellow-apostle. A difference also is very observable in the cast of his understanding, which is neither so quick nor so vigorous, as that of St. Paul. As in the former, we distinguish the same individual impelled by similar motives, though placed in very different situations; equally bold and im-

impatient, whether persecuting Christianity, or preaching in it's support; so in the Apostle, who temporized at Antioch*, we recognize at once an identity with him, who had denied his Master.

THESE marks of sameness and of diversity, are often as discernible in the recital of actions, or of discourses, seemingly trivial, as in fuller details. Thus the incident recorded by St. Luke, at the end of his tenth chapter, is strikingly characteristic of the different tempers of two sisters; one of whom was more attentive to the cares and concerns of the world, while the other shewed a more laudable anxiety to profit by the lessons of Jesus. When we again discover Mary† pouring out the precious ointment, as a mark of veneration, and of gratitude to Jesus, we instantly acknowledge the probability of the fact, from a previous acquaintance

* Galat. ii. 11, &c.

† The character of the other sister is incidentally, but accurately, preserved; for we are told "they made him a supper, and Martha served."

See John xii. ad init. compared with Matth. xxvi. and Mark xiv. This circumstance may seem to throw additional light upon the fact of Lazarus' resurrection. However pious, and however grateful the temper of Mary might be, yet in her humble situation, it is not very likely she would use so expensive a method of shewing her veneration for Jesus, unless she had received some signal mark of favour and kindness from him.

ance with her disposition. The objection which was made by Judas, to the costly manner in which her piety was shewn, and the reasons assigned for the objection, mark a want of feeling, and a spirit of selfishness and hypocrisy, perfectly suitable to the nature of a man, who could betray his Master in the very act of offering a token of respect and attachment.

CONCERNING the obscure and illiterate preachers of the Gospel, it is not likely we should meet with any information in writers, totally different in habits and opinions, as well as remote in situation: but as to the Roman officers, connected with the transactions described by the Evangelists, it was probable some clue would be found for judging of their general character; and this, upon examination, is observed to coincide with the account of the sacred writers. So that these characters are not only drawn without any violation of that resemblance, which the same person in some degree invariably preserves; but they also correspond, so far as they can be compared, with the authentic documents of other antient historians.

WHEN we cast our eyes upon the conduct of these Romans, we instantly perceive the

the insolence and injustice, which were to o frequently practised by the governors of provinces ; we see also evident marks of the alarms, which the consciences of such men would probably excite, however they might be disregarded ; we remark, moreover, that ignorance and contempt* of Jewish manners and customs, which it was consistent with the feelings and sentiments of idolaters, invested with authority, to manifest. If we examine more minutely and distinctly the manner in which these men acted, a variety of style and deportment comes to view, which marks them to be different men. Pilate is unjust, but timorous, and scrupulous of committing an act in itself palpably wrong, from which he sees no probability of advantage to himself ; nor is his reluctance entirely subdued, till he is threatened with the displeasure of Cæsar. The discriminating feature of Gallio's† mind s philosophic

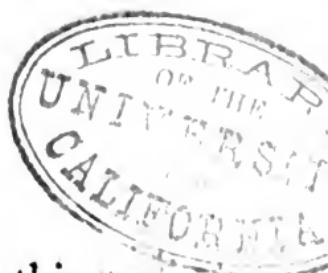
* Thus Pilate, "Am I a Jew?" John xviii. 35. See also Acts xxv. 19, 20.

† Acts xviii. 12, &c. From Seneca's account of his brother, after making due allowance for the warmth of his affection, we may learn, I think, that Gallio was an indolent man, of good temper, but of a literary and philosophic turn, with which St. Luke's account agrees extremely well. See the passages quoted by Lardner, Vol. I. p. 167. See also the character of Felix as represented by Tacitus, ib. p. 27.

philosophic indifference; and in Felix, the predominant passion is made up of curiosity and avarice.

BESIDES this preservation of likeness in individuals, the exact and uncommon propriety, with which the sentiments of particular bodies of men, and even national foibles, are characterized, deserves to be diligently remarked. To mention only one striking instance, I would boldly ask every intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the opinions of Heathen philosophers, and with the turn and humour of the Athenians, whether he does not acknowledge striking proofs of reality in the following passage.

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the Resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus,



pagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things, ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*."

Now we learn from the best sources of information, that Athens was, of all the cities in Greece, the most remarkable for a blind and superstitious attachment to the objects of popular worship; and that there were actually altars in that city, erected in honour of GODS UNKNOWN. It is certain also, that the Athenians were peculiarly jealous in regard to the introduction of new, or strange, gods; and that any offence against

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* Acts xvii. 16, &c. See a variety of the most unquestionable authorities for the truth of all the assertions which follow, in Wetstein's copious notes upon this passage. This coincidence will not fail to be more striking to the learned reader, who will see many of the same terms employed by profane writers, as by St. Luke.

the prevailing religious belief, or ceremonies, came more peculiarly under the cognizance of the Areopagus. The thirst of this people for information, and their passion for novelty, are the subject of complaint in their own countrymen, and of wonder in foreigners. It is a no less curious coincidence that the forum, or *market*, was the scene of their disputation on philosophy, and religion, as well as the common resort of the idlers, who were anxious "to tell, or to hear, some new thing." In addition to the marks of authenticity contained in this passage, we may further urge the pride and superciliousness, which were distinguishing features in the character of the antient philosophers: and with respect to those, who are here mentioned, there certainly was no doctrine more completely at variance with the notions, both of the Stoicks and the Epicureans, than the resurrection of the body: since the former held that the human soul, immediately after death, would be refunded into the universal soul, and thereby lose it's individual existence*; while the Epicureans maintained that it perished entirely. Consequently it was

* See Leland on the Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, Vo p.285.

was probable, that no one assertion of the inspired teacher would excite so much disgust in those proud and bigotted disputants, as that, which we here find them exploding in terms of the most bitter contempt.

FROM the style and contents of these volumes, we have the strongest reasons for concluding, that the authors of them were Jews, in an humble way of life, unacquainted with the arts of composition *. Now it seems inconceivable, that any writers of this description should gain such an accurate and complete knowledge of human nature, and be so thoroughly acquainted with the characters and transactions of the times, as to introduce so many distinguished actors, in a variety of feigned situations, and yet betray no symptoms of inconsistency, nor by any lapse of memory or judgement, shock our belief of the reality of the incidents, or the identity of the characters. The difficulty is greatly increased, when we consider, that it is not a single writer, whose veracity is called in question; but that a variety of writers, upon the supposition of a fraud, must have agreed to relate

* Vid. sup. pag. 10, &c.

late different particulars of the same imaginary transactions, and to introduce the same character in different fictitious situations. For, if a story be really untrue, the chance of discovering it's fallacy, must be increased in exact proportion to the minuteness of the detail, and the number of persons who relate it separately. Where such a story is told very circumstantially, and by a variety of witnesses, the probability of some palpable contradiction is so great, that it seems scarcely possible to escape detection. Yet surely it will be owned by every careful enquirer, that the difference observable in the accounts of the sacred historians, whether we regard character, or incident, is no other than what might naturally be expected, when writers of different parts and dispositions, give an account of the same transactions: nor is it such, as would be thought to impeach the credibility of any other historian, in any other subject.

It seems therefore plainly impossible, that these writers should have concurred in inventing the narratives, which appear under their names: it seems equally difficult to believe, that they should have been prevailed upon by any other person to record that,

which

which they adopted only upon the credit of their informer. And certainly these narratives, whether examined separately, or compared with each other, preserve so invariably such an uniformity of character in the same individual, and throw such vivid colours of discrimination into the actions and manners of the various personages, whom they undertake to record, that it requires a more than ordinary share of sceptical prejudice, to restrain us from believing that they drew from the life, and described actions as they saw them performed, and recorded discourses as they heard them delivered.

LET it moreover be observed, that, in a narrative of various and important transactions; part of which may be verified by the production of positive collateral evidence, while a part must rest upon the accustomed marks of genuineness and authenticity ; if the writer be found adhering to truth, whenever recourse can be had to other and separate means of proof, in such a case the part which is so corroborated, adds force and weight to that which must rest upon the author's credit : so that, if we fail in discovering any error or deceit, where we can apply the touch-stone of independent and unsuspected

suspected history, we are bound by the rules of candour, and of justice, to suppose the writer incapable of either mistake, or fraud; although we cannot directly confront him with competent witnesses, in all the parts of his narrative*.

SEVENTHLY, The caution †, with which the early Christians investigated the claims of those writings, which aspired to a place in the sacred Canon, before they admitted them, stamps an indelible mark of truth upon the books, which they pronounced to be genuine and authentic. They not only separated these books from such as were palpably spurious,

but

* As I wish to confine myself principally to topics, which, as far as my recollection or knowledge extends, have not been dwelt upon by other writers, I have noticed the coincidence between the sacred and profane historians, so far only as it relates to the *characters* of nations, or individuals. The coincidence in other material points in chronology, and history, &c. (which is indeed a most important branch of internal evidence,) has been most fully, and ably discussed by Lardner; and after him by Dr. Paley, in his truly admirable View of the Evidences of Christianity, part II. chapter 6. What Michaelis has urged on this head, Vol. I. pp. 50—54. is singularly worth attention. To those, who are not conversant with these subjects, I may be permitted to recommend as a source of considerable entertainment and satisfaction, Harmer's Observations on divers Passages of Scripture, in 4 Vols. 8vo. lately re-published.

† This argument is not strictly applicable to internal evidence, but as it leads to considerations wholly belonging to that branch of proof, I wish not to suppress it. The ixth chapter, part I. of Dr. Paley's Evidences, may be studied with great advantage, particularly sect. 8. and 11.

but weighed the evidence in their favour with such scrupulousness, as to throw into a lower class the compositions, which afforded room for the slightest doubt respecting their authority. It is well known, that Eusebius * has divided the books really written, or pretended to be written, by the Apostles and Evangelists, into three classes, in conformity with the opinion of the best informed Christians, in the age in which he flourished, and the times preceding it. From him we find that the first and highest class was assigned to "books of undoubted authority, and universally received in the Church as genuine." In the second class were contained such as were "doubtful, but acknowledged by the most to be genuine." The third and lowest class consisted of such as were manifestly spurious.

By this accurate discrimination, not only were the trifles of sophists, the dreams of enthusiasts, and the forgeries of impostors, properly stigmatized, but the different degrees of evidence, belonging to the more respectable compositions, were weighed so nicely,

* Hist. Eccles. Lib. III. c. 25. Michaelis, c. 2. sect.
3. with the learned translator's notes.

nicely, that, of the writings which compose our present canon, though by far the greater part justly claimed the distinction of the higher class, yet some few* even of these had their station allotted in the second, as in some measure falling short of that full and satisfactory proof, by which alone they could be judged worthy of an undisputed place in the sacred code. No profane writings whatsoever, underwent such a trial as this, or had their pretensions scrutinized with so much minuteness, so soon after their first appearance; surely, therefore, we are warranted in affixing the title of genuine to the narratives of the Evangelists, and the Epistles of St. Paul, with at least the same degree of justice, with which it is readily allowed to the histories of Thucydides, Xenophon and Cæsar, and to the letters of Cicero and Pliny.

IF however we confine ourselves entirely to internal proof, a more satisfactory attestation to the genuineness and authenticity of the books of the New Testament cannot be shewn to a reader of taste and candour, than what is supplied by comparing them with

* The Epistles of James and Jude, the second of Peter, with the second and third of John,

with those spurious compositions, which were justly placed in the lowest class by the early Christians.

THE beauty of nature is never so conspicuous, as when contrasted with the productions of art; and truth itself never shines with such unrivalled brilliancy, as when it is placed by the side of fiction. Such at least is the result of a comparison between the genuine productions of Christian antiquity, and those counterfeit imitations, which false zeal, or designing artifice, endeavoured to impose upon the world, as equally deserving of credit. For in the first place, an imitation implies the existence of an original. It is scarcely possible that any spurious Gospels or Epistles should have appeared, unless there had been extant genuine and authentic compositions, with a similar title and character; that is, accounts of the life and conduct of Jesus Christ, drawn up by credible witnesses, and letters written to the various infant Churches, by persons invested with some share of authority over them.

As the long train of pretended miracles, by which the credulity of mankind was assailed in succeeding ages, naturally leads an

enquiring mind to suppose, that some miraculous acts had really been performed in the time of Jesus and his Apostles, in imitation of which those later wonders were asserted to have taken place; so the existence of a variety of spurious compositions, professing to give an account of the life and actions of Jesus, or to give directions to Christian Churches, under the name and authority of the Evangelists and Apostles, affords, of itself, a strong ground of belief, that there were in truth books of undoubted credit, realizing the character, to which the fictions of later ages aspired.

PERHAPS this position is universally true, and may be considered as applicable to the impositions of the Heathen oracles, and to the assumptions of Heathen Legislators, as well as of other pretenders to divine revelations.— If traditions, resting ultimately upon a basis of truth, had not existed concerning some intercourse of man with Heaven; if the Deity had not really vouchsafed to communicate to some of his highly-favoured creatures an insight into futurity, and had not made a formal promulgation of his will by revelation, the oracles of Dodona and Delphi, the converse of Numa with Egeria and the Muses,

Muses, or the more bold, and more successful pretensions of Mahomet, might not have been heard of. However this may be, yet, in the case of the true and Apocryphal Gospels, it can scarcely admit of a doubt, but that the appearance of the counterfeit volumes implies the previous existence of such as *were* in reality, what these *pretended* to be.

IF we inspect, even superficially, the contents of these Apocryphal* writings, the proof

* Fabricius has made a collection of the Apocryphal writings relating to the Old Testament, under the title of Codex Pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti, 12mo. pp. 1174. Hamburg. & Lips. 1713. He has also, with equal diligence and learning, collected and illustrated those, which relate to the New Testament. The edition, from which my extracts are made, consists of three parts in 12mo. comprehending about 2000 pp. and was published at Hamburg 1719. If any Sopater or Leo (see the preface of Fabricius) should reprehend me for employing my time upon such books, I trust they will not object to an apology in the words of St. Ambrose,— Legimus aliqua, ne legantur, legimus ne ignoremus, legimus non ut teneamus, sed ut repudiemus, et ut sciamus, qualia sint, in quibus magnifici isti (sc. Hæretici) cor exaltant suum. Commentar. in S. Luc. proæm.

I had not an opportunity, till very lately, of becoming acquainted with Mr. Jones's work, entitled, "A new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament." It was first published in 1726—7. For the re-publication of this, and of other scarce and valuable books in Theology, we are indebted to the liberality and zeal of the conductors of the Clarendon Pres. This writer has brought together, with uncommon diligence and judgement, the external evidence for the authenticity and genuineness of the

proof becomes more decisive in favour of those, which we esteem canonical. The style and the manner of the former betray so plainly the marks of imitation and the intentions of imposture, that they set off more conspicuously the truth and originality of the latter.

BESIDES the want of external authority, in which the Apocryphal writings are palpably deficient, the reverse of every position, which has been applied to the books of the New Testament, might be shewn to be true of these. To give a variety to the subject, and to place the proof of their want of genuineness in a clearer light, another arrangement of particulars has been adopted: in conformity with which we may remark,

that

the Canonical books, (so far as he was enabled to execute his plan) and he has, with equal ability and fairness, stated his reasons for deciding against the authority of the Apocryphal.—In the prosecution of this important design, he has not only quoted, but translated, the greater part of the contents of Fabricius's two first volumes: so that the English reader may consult, through the medium of his translation, the passages I have taken occasion to quote from that collection.

Mr. Jones was chiefly led to consider the external evidence; yet he has occasionally stated some defects of authenticity, which are visible in the structure and materials of the Apocryphal books themselves. I might therefore have enlarged this chapter with many observations from him; but it remains, as it was originally written. I would however earnestly advise those of my readers, who may not yet be masters of the subject, to study very carefully this valuable work.

that the following, amongst other qualities, strikingly characteristic of fraud and error, are observable in the spurious Gospels and Epistles.

I. The appearance of a design to support some doctrine or practice, or to obviate some heresy, which had their origin subsequent to the Apostolic age.

II. A detail of impertinent and trifling circumstances.

III. The introduction of useless and improbable miracles.

IV. A studied imitation of various passages in the genuine scriptures, both to conceal the fraud, and to allure readers.

V. A poverty of style, and barrenness of invention, glossing over the want of incident by sophistical declamation.

VI. Contradictions to known historical facts.

VII. An officious intrusion of the pretended authors' names.

VIII. Actions, utterly unworthy the character of a personage, divinely commissioned to instruct and reform mankind, are ascribed to Jesus.

I. THE

I. THE corrupt doctrines, relative to the Virgin Mary, form an essential part in the scheme of some of these designers. Those who believed, or affected to believe, that the Virgin was exalted into Heaven, who adopted the notion of her immaculate conception, and her power of working miracles, found but little countenance for their absurdities in the genuine Gospels. It was a task too hard for them to defend such tenets against their adversaries, while the canonical books were the only authority they could appeal to. Hence a Gospel was written *de Nativitate Mariæ*, in which her birth is foretold by Angels, and herself represented as always under the peculiar protection of Heaven. Hence in the Gospel, attributed to James, which assumed the name of Protovangelium, as claiming the superiority over every other, whether canonical or apocryphal, the fact of the immaculate conception is supported by such a miracle, as to leave no doubt upon the most incredulous mind. Hence too in the *Evangelium Infantiae*, the Virgin, who is simply said by St. Matthew to have gone into Egypt, is represented as making her progress more like a divinity, than

than a mortal, performing, by the assistance of her infant Son, a variety of miracles, such as might entitle her, in the minds of the blind and bigotted, to divine honours. To shew the extent to which these forgeries have been carried, and at the same time to exhibit a remarkable contrast between the doctrine and the style of the genuine Epistles, and such as are surreptitious, it will be worth while to quote two letters, pretended to be written by the Virgin Mary to the inhabitants of Messana and Florence, with a view to support her honour, and flatter their vanity.

MARIA Virgo, Joachini filia, humillima Dei ancilla, Christi Jesu crucifixi mater, ex tribu Juda, stirpe David, Messanensibus omnibus salutem, et Dei Patris omnipotentis benedictionem.

Vos omnes fide magnâ legatos ac nuncios per publicum documentum ad nos misisse constat. Filium nostrum Dei genitum, Deum et hominem esse fatemini, et in cœlum post suam resurrectionem ascendisse, Pauli Apostoli prædicatione mediante, viam veritatis agnoscentes. Ob quod vos et civitatem vestram benedicimus, cuius perpetuam pro-

F tectrice

tectrice nos esse volumus—Anno filii nostri XLII. 3. Nonis Julii, luncæ 17, feriâ quintâ, ex Hierosolymis.

MARIA VIRGO*.

Epistola S. MARIE Virginis ad Florentinos.

FLORENTIA, Deo et Domino Jesu Christo Filio meo et mihi dilecta. Tene fidem, insta Orationibus, roborare patientiâ. His enim sempiternam consequeris salutem apud Deum †.

ANOTHER doctrine, which these spurious writings were intended to establish, was the sanctity of relics. As a striking proof of this, we are told, in the *Evangelium Infantiae* † that, when the Magi had offered their gifts to the new-born Infant, Domina Maria sumxit unam ex illis tæniis (quibus involutus erat infans) eamque loco benedictionis illis tradidit, quam ipsi tanquam munus præclarissimum ab eâ acceperunt.

As bandages, of a similar nature and efficacy, were preserved in some churches with
the

* Fabric. Codex Apocryph. Nov. Testamenti, Tom. II. p. 849.

† Ibid. p. 852.

‡ Cap. vii.

the most superstitious reverence*, the purpose, for which the above passage, was written, is obvious.

THE various miracles, which we are told in these legends, that our Saviour wrought in his infancy, were doubtless intended to counteract the absurd notion of those heretics, who pretended that Jesus was a mere man till the period of his baptism, when the *Æon*, or spirit, Christ, entered into him, and enabled him to perform his miracles. Epiphanius, whose judgment did not always keep pace with his zeal, has unfortunately given countenance to these fictions for this very reason†. Καὶ ἔδει τῷ μὲν ὄντι καὶ παιδαρικὰ αὐτὸν ἔχειν, οὐαὶ μὴ πρόφασις γένηται ταῖς ἄλλαις αἱρέσεις ταῖς λεγέσαις, ὅτι ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου ἦλθε Χριστὸς εἰς αὐτὸν, ὅπερ ἐσὶν οὐ περισσερά.

II. As to the second head, the contrast is equally striking between the true, and the counterfeit, Gospels. The goodness of God has indeed supplied us with abundant materials for faith, and incitements to virtue, in

the

* Fasces Christi aiunt Romæ ostendi ad S. Pauli, et insignem ex illis particulam in Hispania ad S. Salvatoris, ubi et Christi cunæ et indusum monstrari feruntur. Fabric. ad loc. Vid. etiam cap. v. et ibi annotat.

† Hæres. LI. Alog. num. 20. Fabric. p. 130.

the example, and in the lessons, of our blessed Lord, recorded by his followers. We cannot therefore have any just reasons for regret, that the accounts are not more numerous and more circumstantial.—We may however both observe and admire the conciseness, with which some deeply interesting transactions are related; and we may feel a pious satisfaction in the assurance, that the actions and discourses of Jesus, were of such a nature, as to occasion a redundancy of matter for the labours of the sacred penmen, and not only to authorize, but even to require, the omission of a variety of important facts*.

But

* “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” John xxi. 25.—The hyperbole, here employed by the Evangelist, has been objected to as exceeding all proper bounds. If however it be considered, as it surely ought to be, with reference to the subject of this comprehensive encomium, and to the high-flown expressions in use amongst the writer’s countrymen, the objection will fall to the ground. I beg leave to contrast some instances of a similar turn of thought, in the chaste and polished compositions of Greece and Rome, with the extravagant ideas of some Jewish Rabbies, and I think that the passage in question will appear to preserve a just and natural medium between them. Isocrates, after enumerating the virtues of Hippoönus, says, ἐπιλίποι δ' αὐτὸν οὐ μόνος ὁ παῖς χρόνος, εἰς τάσσας ταῦς ἔχεις τοπεῖς καταριθμηταῖςθα. Ad Demonicum in init. Cicero, arguing in praise of Pompey, exclaims, “Hujus autem orationis difficilis est exitum, quam principium, invenire. Itaque non mihi tām copia, quam modus in dicendo quārendus est.” Pro Leg. Manil.

“He



But the materials of the Pseud-Evangelists were too scanty to render the task of selection necessary; and the result of their labours is very little adapted to produce similar satisfaction, or to excite similar reflections in the minds of their readers. The unimportant and frivolous details, with which their pages are filled, are a plain proof, that they were not possessed of any real and original information upon the subject, which they undertake to elucidate; and clearly invalidate their pretensions, as eye-witnesses of the transactions, which attended the introduction of the new religion. Thus, in the Gospel ascribed to St. James, we are presented with a dull and silly dialogue between the mother of Mary and her waiting-maid*, and with another dialogue †, equally impertinent, between the parents of Mary. We have also, in the same performance ‡, a grave consultation of priests about the making a veil for the temple; and, not to enlarge upon a matter

"He was succeeded by Jochanan, not in right of descent, but of his extraordinary merit, which the Rabbies, according to custom, have raised to so surprizing a height, that, according to them, if the whole heavens were paper, all the trees in the world pens, and all the men writers, they would not suffice to pen down all his lessons." Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. X. p. 430. note.

* Protevang. Jacobi c. 2. † Ibid. c. 7. ‡ c. 10.

matter so obvious, the following passage* occurs in a tedious description of Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. Καὶ ἐξράφη Ἰωσὴφ, καὶ εἶδε τὴν Μαρίαν συγνήν καὶ εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ Ἰωσὴφ, οἵσως τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ χειροῦζει αὐτήν. Καὶ πάλιν ἐξράφη Ἰωσὴφ, καὶ εἶδεν αὐτήν γελῶσαν, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Μαρίχ, τί ἔσιν, ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπόν σου βλέπω ποτὲ μὲν συγνὸν, ποτὲ δὲ γελῶν καὶ ἀγαλλιώμενον; καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν Μαρία· δύο λαβὲς βλέπω τοῖς ὄφθαλμοῖς με, ἵνα κλαίοντα καὶ κοπήσμενον, καὶ ἓνα γελῶντα καὶ ἀγαλλιώμενον.

III. It will readily be allowed, that all miracles, ascribed to the mother of Jesus, or to himself in his infancy, may be called useless and improbable. A consistent Christian cannot admit the extraordinary interference of the divinity, except for the high and important purpose of establishing the authority of some person, commissioned to declare his will to mankind. The manner and circumstance of the interference must be marked with a dignity, and solemnity, befitting the more immediate presence of the Almighty. When therefore we observe any miraculous acts attributed to persons, not exercising such a commission, performed upon frivolous or improper occasions, or marked

* Protevangel. Jacob. Cap. 17.

marked by any circumstance of levity or inanity, we conclude that the report of such miracles is unworthy our attention *, and that the reporters of them are to be suspected of gross error, or intentional deceit. Thus we smile with contempt at the prodigies of a writer, who gravely relates as a stupendous miracle, that a child at the age of three years, ascended without assistance the steps of the temple at Jerusalem, which were half a cubit each in height †. In the same Gospel ‡, in supposed accommodation to a prophecy of Isaiah, which is most grossly misinterpreted, a declaration from Heaven is alleged to have taken place in favour of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus, similar to that, which, upon the strongest grounds, we believe to have been made in honour of Jesus at his baptism. The bandage, which was before mentioned, as having been presented by Mary to the magi, is of course represented as the instrument of a miracle, being cast into a fire, yet not consumed §.

In

* These deserve to be classed with the fictions, of which Ovid speaks :

Prodigiosa loquor veterum miracula vatum :
Nec tulit hæc, nec fert, nec feret ulla dies.

Compare Amor. iii. 6, 17. with Trist. iii. 8, 12.

† Vid. Evangel. de Nativit. Mariæ, c. 6.

‡ Ibid. c. 8.

§ Evangel. Infant. c. 8.

In another of these ingenious productions, when Elisabeth wished to shelter her infant Son from the persecution of Herod, she is said to have been thus wonderfully preserved.

Ἡ δὲ Ελισάβετ ἀκέστασα, ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς μέλλει ζητεῖσθαι, λαβέσσα αὐτὸν ἀνέβη εἰς τὴν ὄρειν τὴν, καὶ περιεβλέπετο τόπου, ἐν ᾧ ἀποκρύψει αὐτόν. καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τόπου ἀπόκρυφος. Καὶ σενάργεσσα λέγει, ὅρος τῷ Θεῷ δέξαι μητέρα μητὰ τέκνων. καὶ γὰρ ἡδύνατο ἡ Ελισάβετ προσαναβῆναι. Καὶ παραχρῆμα ἐδιχάσθη τὸ ὄρος ἐκεῖνο, καὶ ἐν διαφαίνων αὐτοῖς ἄγγελος κυρίς, καὶ διαφυλάττων αὐτές*. Not to mention the variety of miraculous acts in Egypt by Mary and her Son, the palpable absurdity of these forgers cannot be placed in a stronger light, than by remarking, that the powers attributed to Jesus in his early years, are applied to facilitate the operations of Joseph in his trade†.

IV. The striking contrast between truth and falsehood, is naturally heightened, when those passages come under consideration, which are borrowed from the genuine Scriptures, and, with more or less deviation from the original, adapted to the purposes of the Apocryphal writers. The simple fact, which is

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 22.

† Evangel. Infant. c. 38—39.

is contained in the 19th verse of the 1st chapter of St. Matthew, is expanded through a chapter and an half in the Protevangelium Jacobi*. Again, the plain narrative of St. Luke, c. ii. 16. is not thought sufficient for the great event which was just before related, and accordingly it is thus improved in the Evangelium Infantiae. *Deinde cùm advenissent Pastores, et succenso igne, admodùm lætarentur, apparuerunt illis exercitus cœlestes laudantes et celebrantes Deum supremum, idémque facientibus pastoribus, spelunca ista tunc temporis augusto templo simillima videbatur, quoniām ora cœlestia, pariter, et terrestria celebrabant et magnificabant Deum ob nativitatem Domini Christi.* Videns verò Anus illa Hebræa manifesta illa miracula, gratias Deo agebat, dicens: *Gratias tibi ago, O Deus, Deus Isrælis, propterea quòd viderunt oculi mei nativitatem servatoris mundi †.* The short and interesting account, which is given by the genuine Evangelist at the end of the same chapter, is considered by the author of a spurious Gospel, as by no means adequate to

* Capp. 13, 14.

† Evang. Infant. c. 4. The latter part is plainly an imitation of Luke, c. ii. 30.

to the great dignity of our Saviour's character, nor calculated to satisfy the just curiosity of pious Christians. We are therefore informed, that Jesus, in his conference with the doctors in the temple, after explaining the books of the law, and unfolding the mysteries contained in the Prophetical writings, exhibited a knowledge no less profound of astronomy, medicine and natural history*. Hence too in the Gospel attributed to Nicodemus, the particulars of our Saviour's trial, are enumerated most fully,

the

* *Evang. Infant.* capp. 50, &c. This latter part is so curious, and forms such a contrast to the manner of the sacred historians, and indeed of all serious history, that I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing it. Cūnque adesset ibidem philosophus, astronomiae peritus, rogarētque Dominum Jesum, num astronomiæ studuisset? respondebat ipsi Dominus Jesus, exponebātque numerum sphærarum, et corporum cœlestium: eorūmque naturas et operationes, oppositionem, aspectum triquetrum, quadratum et sextilem: progressionem eorundem et retrogradationem, computum denique et prognosticationem, aliāque quæ nullius unquam hominis ratio pervestigavit. Aderat quoque inter illos philosophus, medicinæ et naturalis scientiæ peritissimus; qui cum rogāssest Dominum Jesum, an medicinæ studuisset? respondens ille exposuit ipsi physica et metaphysica, hyperphysica et hypophysica; virtutes quoque corporis et humores, eorundēmque effectus; numerum item membrorum et ossium, venarum, arteriarum et nervorum, temperamenta etiam, calidum et siccum, frigidum et humidum, quæque ex hisce orientur: quænam esset operatio animæ in corpus, ejusque sensationes et virtutes; facultates loquendi, irascendi, appetendi: denique congregationem et dissipationem: aliāque quæ nullius creature intellectus unquam penetravit. Tunc surgebat philosophus iste, et Dominum Jesum adorabat, et, O Domine Jesu, inquit, ab hoc tempore ero discipulus tuus et servus.

the testimony of the witnesses both for, and against, him is given at large, and the expostulations of Pilate with the Jews are recorded, with a minuteness equal to their imagined importance. And as, in the genuine history of these transactions, the Roman governour is reported to have put a question of considerable moment, to which our Saviour vouchsafed no answer, or the Evangelists have failed to record it, these falsifiers have thought proper to supply so essential a defect. *Dicit ei Pilatus, quid est veritas? Dicit Jesus, Veritas de cœlo est.* *Dicit Pilatus: In terris ergo veritas non est?* *Dicit Jesus Pilato: Intende veritatem esse in terrâ inter illos, qui, dum potestatem habent judicandi, veritate utuntur, et judicia rectè faciunt**.

V. The genuine writings of the Apostles and Evangelists are certainly not to be valued for those graces, with which a knowledge of the rules of composition, and a careful study of the best models, will enable a writer of taste and diligence to adorn his labours.—They are not to be praised for the structure of the sentences, the flow of the periods,

* *Evang. Nicod. c. 3.*

periods, or the choice of the expressions. But there is a bold negligence, an artless simplicity in the sacred volumes, which to a lover of truth and nature, are more interesting than the most laboured effects of art. It is apparent, that they wish to represent facts, as they really occurred, and discourses, as they were really delivered: and though we frequently pause in admiration of the simple touches of nature, and the lively representation of incidents, yet these are embellishments, which arise from the nature of the subject, or the honest warmth of the writer. There is no effort at ornament, under which they appear to sink, no aim at beauties, which they seem unable to attain. The expression is never at variance with the subject. Bent upon relating facts, which no description could fully reach, they leave the reader satisfied, that the most simple description is likewise the most proper.

FAR different are the impressions made upon a reader's mind, by the spurious productions, the spawn of artifice and error.— Sometimes sinking into a poverty of style, and sometimes soaring to a bombast elevation, they are at times equally above, and below, that happy mediocrity ,which is characteristic

racteristic of the Apostolical histories. It is scarcely possible to open a page in the Gospel of Nicodemus, without discovering a tenuity of style and manner, utterly unworthy any important narrative. Take a sample from that mass of absurdities, which professes to relate our Saviour's transactiōns in Hades. Dominus autem tenens manum Adæ, tradidit Michaeli Archangelo, et omnes sancti sequebantur Michaelem Archangelum, et introduxit in Paradiso gratiā gloriosā, et occurrerunt eis obviām duo viri vetusti dierum. Interrogati autem à sanctis: Qui estis vos, qui nobiscum apud inferos nondum fuistis, et in Paradiso corpore collocati estis? Respondens unus ex eis dixit: Ego sum Enoch, qui verbo translatus sum. Hic iste, qui mecum est, Elias Thesbites est, qui curru igneo assumptus est. Hic et usque nunc non gustavimus mortem, sed in adventum Christi reversuri sumus divinis signis et prodigiis præcincti ad præliandum cum eo, et ab eo occidi in Jerusalem. Et post triduum et dimidium dierum iterūm vivi in nubibus assumendi*.

An instance of the attempts at elevation of style, may be observed in the description of

* Ev. Nic. c. 25.

of the prodigies, which are supposed to have taken place at the birth of our Saviour.

Ἐγὼ δὲ (λέγει Ἰωσῆφ) τερπατῶν ἀνέβλεψα εἰς τὸν ἀέρα, καὶ εἶδον τὸν ἀέρα ἔκθαμβον, καὶ τὰ πέτεινα τῷ ψρανῷ ἥρεμεντα. Καὶ ἐπέβλεψα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ εἶδον σκάφην κειμένην, καὶ ἐργάτας ἀνακειμένους, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν ἥσαν ἐπὶ τὴν σκάφην. Καὶ οἱ μαστόμενοι ἐκ ἐμάσσοντο· καὶ οἱ ἀναφέροντες ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, ὡκ ἀνέφερον· καὶ οἱ προσφέροντες, τῷ σώματι ω προσέφερον· ἀλλὰ πάντων ἦν τὰ πρόσωπα ἄνω βλέποντα. Καὶ εἶδον πρόσωπα ἐλαυνομενα, καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα ἐσήκεισαν. Καὶ ἤρεν ὁ ποιμὴν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῷ, πατάξαι αὐτὰ, καὶ ἡ χεὶρ αὐτῷ ἐγή ἄνω. καὶ ἐβλεψα εἰς τὸν χείμαρρὸν πωταμὸν, καὶ εἶδον τὸς ἑρίφες καὶ τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐπικείμενα τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ μὴ πίνοντα*.

BARRENNESS of invention is conspicuously marked in the productions of these Sophists, since with the greatest latitude of fiction, and the most flagrant violation of truth, they are perpetually borrowing incidents from other sources; from the pure stream of sacred truth, as well as the polluted current of heathen fiction. Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. c. i.) are the prototypes of Joachim and Anna, in the Protovangelium,

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 18.

vangelium, which passes under the name of St. James; and the circumstances, which really attended the birth of Samuel, are, with many absurd and improbable additions, transferred to the nativity of Mary. In the same Gospel, and in that which derives it's name from the birth of Mary (both of which are evidently written with a design to raise her character) the descent of the Holy Spirit is combined with the budding of Aaron's rod, in order to furnish out a miracle of sufficient magnitude, to do honour to the Virgin's nuptials*. The scene of the incident (Protevangel. c. 11.) is probably borrowed from some profane author; and a still more striking resemblance is discoverable between a pretended miracle of Christ, and the alleged effects of witchcraft, in a story of Apuleius†. Indeed the implicit credit which

* Compare Numbers xvii. 8. and Matt. iii. 16. with the Evangel. de Nat. Mar. capp. 7. and 8. and with the Protevangel. capp. 8. and 9.

† Quodam etiam die, (says the author of the Evangel. Infant. c. 44.) cum Dominus Jesus versaretur inter pueros, qui in tecto ludebant, quidam puerorum ex alto decidens confessim expiravit. Diffugientibus vero cæteris pueris, Dominus Jesus solus in tecto remansit, cumque advenissent propinqui istius pueri, dicebant Domino Iesu: Tu filium nostrum ex tecto præcipitem dedisti. Illo autem id negante, vociferabantur dicentes: Filius noster mortuus est, et hic est, qui illum interfecit. Quibus Dominus Jesus, Ne me, inquit, arguite facinoris, cuius neutquam me convincere poteritis, sed agite,

which is given to the operations of witchcraft, and it's frequent introduction into these narratives, enable us to form a very accurate judgement of the esteem, in which they ought to be held; and the result of a comparison in this point, between them and the canonical books, cannot fail to be decisive as to the genuine merit of the latter.

In the passages which have been already adduced, the hand of a Sophist has been sufficiently evident; and the trick of concealing the want of original and authentic materials under a load of declamation, is too

obvious

agite, rogemus puerum ipsum, qui veritatem in lucem producat. Tunc descendens Dominus Jesus stetit super capite mortui, et voce magnâ, Zeinune, inquit, Zeinune, quis te de recto præcipitavit? tunc respondens mortuus, Domine, ait, non tu me dejecisti, sed ὁ δῆνας me ex illo deturbavit. Et cùm præcepisset Dominus adstantibus, ut ad verba ejus attenderent; omnes, qui aderant, Deum pro hoc miraculo laudabant.

In like manner, a Magician in Apuleius is represented as compelling a dead man to declare the cause of his death. *Propheta . . . orientem obversus, et incrementa solis augusti tacitus imprecatus, venerabilis scenæ facie studia præsentium ad miraculum tantum certatim adrexit. Jam tumore pectus extolli: jam salubris vena pulsari: jam spiritu corpus impleri: et adsurgit cadaver, et profatur adolescens: Quid, oro, me post Lethæa pocula, jam Stygiis paludibus innatantem, ad momentariæ vitæ reducis officia? Desine jam, precor, define ac me in meam quietem permitte. Hæc audita vox de corpore. Sed aliquantò Propheta commotior, Quin refers, ait, populo singula, tuæque mortis illuminas arcana? Suscipit ille de lectulo, et uno congestu populum sic adorat: Malis novæ nuptæ peremptus artibus, et addictus noxio poculo, torum repente adultero mancipavi, &c. Metamorphos. Lib. 2.*

obvious to have escaped the notice, or eluded the practice, of these impostors. The speech of the Angel to Joachim (Ev. de Nat. Mar. c. 3.) is a glaring case in point; but as the enumeration of faults and blemishes is no pleasing task, I shall content myself with citing a single passage, which the reader may contrast with the impressive brevity, and interesting simplicity, of the sacred historians.

Καὶ ἡτένισεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ ἔιδε καλίαν σφράγιων ἐν τῇ δάφνῃ, καὶ ἐποίησε θρῆνον ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγγοσα. Οἱ μοι τίς με ἐγένυνησε, τοῖα δὲ μήτρας ἔξεφυσέ με, ὅτι ἐγὼ κατάρα ἐγεννήθην ἐνώπιον τῶν νιῶν Ισραὴλ; καὶ ὀνείδισαν καὶ ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῇ Θεῷ με. Οἱ μοι τίνι ὄμοιώθην; οὐχ ὄμοιώθην ἐγὼ τοῖς Θηρίοις τῆς γῆς, ὅτι αὐτὰ τὰ Θηρία τῆς γῆς γόνιμά εἰς ἐνώπιόν σε, Κύριε. Οἱ μοι τίνι ὄμοιώθην ἐγώ; οὐχ ὄμοιώθην ἐγὼ τοῖς ὕδασι τέτοις, ὅτι αὐτὰ τὰ ὕδατα γόνιμά εἰσιν ἐνώπιόν σε, Κύριε. οἱ μοι τίνι ὄμοιώθην ἐγώ; οὐχ ὄμοιώθην ἐγὼ τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ, ὅτι καὶ ἡ γῆ προσφέρει τὰς καρπὰς αὐτῆς, καὶ εὐλογεῖ σε, Κύριε*.

VII. HOWEVER strong the argument from other sources of comparison may appear,
and

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 3. A passage in the following chapter is plainly characteristic of a Sophist's workmanship.
Ἔδε γὰς ἡ χήρα, ἔκετι χήρα· καὶ ἀτεκνος, ἐν γαστρὶ λήψομαι.

and however great the probability may be from other causes in favour of our position, yet there are some criteria of truth, which neither dulness of apprehension, nor obstinacy of opinion, can elude. In a question, of this sort, there are some marks too decisive to suffer any hesitation, and to which, perhaps, the last appeal must be made. I allude to those chronological and historical errors, into which all impostors, in spite of their precautions, will at some time or other fall; and which, when the case is clearly made out, will defy every attempt at vindication. In addition to the other proofs which have been brought forward, with a view to ascertain, by minute comparison, the undoubted superiority of the canonical writings over the coinage of later times, this important species of evidence must not be forgotten. When therefore we observe the errors into which these imitators have fallen, and consider how accurate and complete the accounts of the genuine writers have been proved—writers who certainly had not, humanly speaking, more, if so many, advantages, as these servile and fraudulent copiers—the result in favour of truth is equally strong and satisfactory. Thus in the Gospels

pel de Nativ. Mariæ, Isaschar is said to have been the high priest; but in the production of the Pseud-Evangelist James, Reuben is said to have been in possession of that office. Not to insist upon the evident contradiction between the impostors themselves, it is certain that the priesthood could not at that time have been in possession of either* of these pretended personages. Thus too a king of Jerusalem † is mentioned at a period, when it is certain no king reigned there, but the supreme power was vested in the hands of a Roman governour. In another of these elaborate histories, Mary is said to have made a vow of perpetual celibacy; and a liturgy, ascribed to St. James, includes a particular supplication for the pious inhabitants of monasteries ‡. Thus, in order at once to solve the difficulty concerning the age of Zacharias,

* Apud Josephum, et alios fide dignos scriptores, de utroque ne γε. Fabric. Rudem fuisse et indoctum non sola arguit dictio, sed etiam quod Pontificem facit Isascharem, qualis tum esse non potuit, ut ex serie eorum liquet apud Josephum, Antiquit. Lib. xv. xvi. xvii. et Lib. 1. de bello Judaico ac cæteris. Gerh. Joh. Vossius Libro de Geneal. Christi, p. 34.

† Evangel. Infant. c. 39.

‡ Vid. Abraham. Scultet. apud Fabric. p. 58.

Zacharias*, who is mentioned by our Saviour, as having been slain between the temple and the altar, they accommodate a rabbinical tale, to the narrative of a murder, which never happened. To mention only one other instance of gross inaccuracy; in a letter supposed to be written by the Virgin Mary, she is made to date it in the year of her son 42, although the practice of computing from the birth of Jesus Christ, had not it's origin, until five centuries after his death †.

VII. A

* Compare Matth. xxiii. 35. and the annotations of Wetstein, with c. 23 of Protevangel. Jacob. and the learned comment of Fabricius. Some Fathers of the Christian Church were deceived by these Apocryphal accounts of Zacharias, for which they are properly blamed by St. Jerome.

† “In the first ages of Christianity, the Christians had no particular epocha to themselves, but used that of the building of the city, or the years of the Cæsars in common with the Romans; the first they did make use of, was the Æra of Diocletian, whose terrible persecution made such an impression upon their minds, that the time it happened was long after in remembrance. But it was not till the year 532, that the birth of our Lord became to be an Æra, being introduced by Dionysius, surnamed Exiguus, a learned Monk, born in Scythia, and an intimate friend of Cassiodorus, who wrote an encomium upon him.”

“But his computation was not exact, for in this age it is found to have begun too late; at first it was not discovered to be above two years too short, but at last it is found out to want four years, insomuch that this year which we write 1713, ought to be 1717.” Hearne’s *Ductor Historicus*, Vol. I. p.

I cannot recommend this Author as a guide, implicitly to be followed, in all his statements. His account of Mahomet, in particular, is very inaccurate.

VII. A FRAUDULENT intention on the part of these authors, is betrayed by the manner, in which they introduce the names of the persons, upon whom they have attempted to father their own spurious productions. This circumstance is the more observable, as in the genuine Evangelical histories, there appears not the slightest solicitude on the part of the writers, to hand their names down to posterity; and the only one*, who introduces himself to the reader in his own character, does it in the following artless manner. Καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκε, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτῷ ἐσιν ἡ μαρτυρία· κἀκεῖνος οἶδεν, ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσῃτε. and once more. Οὗτός εσιν ὁ μαθητής, ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τότεων, καὶ γράψας ταῦτα· καὶ οἴδαμεν, ὅτι ἀληθής ἐσιν ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῷ†. How very different is the unaffected simplicity of St. John, from the artificial and forced introduction of the names of St. James and St. Thomas, in the Apocryphal books respectively ascribed to them. Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἰάκωβος ἔγραψα τὴν ἰσορίαν ταύτην ἐν Ἱερουσαλύ-
μοις

* We may, indeed, add the Proemium of St. Luke; in which however, his name is not mentioned. *ἴδοξε καὶ μοι*—“it seemed good to me also”—is the unaffected style of his exordium.

† John, xix. 35.

‡ John xxi. 24.

μοις. Ἡ Γενομένη δὲ Θόρυβος, συνέσειλα ἐγὼ ἔμαυτον
 ἐν τόπῳ ἕρήμω, ἔως ὃ ἐτελεύτησεν Ἡρώδης. Καὶ
 κατεπάνθη ὁ Θόρυβος ἐν Ιερουσαλύμοις. Τότε λοιπὸν
 ἦρεν δοξάζων τὸν Θεὸν, τὸν δόντα μοι τοιάυτην
 σοφίαν, τῷ γράψαι ὑμῖν τοῖς πνευματικοῖς, καὶ
 ἀγαπῶσι τὸν Θεὸν, ὃ οὐ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, εἰς
 τὴς αἰώνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν. So concludes
 the Protevangelium of the pretended St.
 James. The Gospel of the Infancy, which
 passed for the composition of his fellow
 Apostle, St. Thomas, has this exordium:
 Ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην ἐγὼ Θαμᾶς ὁ Ἰσραηλίτης,
 πᾶσι τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἀδελφοῖς γνώρισαι τὰ παιδικὰ
 καὶ μεγαλεῖα τῷ Χριστῷ, ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ Κύριος
 ἡμῶν καὶ Θεὸς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, γεννηθεὶς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ
 ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ Βηθλεὲμ, εξισάμενος. ὃν οὐ ἀρχή ἐστι
 αὕτη.

VIII. WHATSOEVER idea may have been formed of the character of Jesus Christ, with respect to the reality of his divine mission, it is universally allowed, that he is represented, in the Canonical Scriptures, as a being singularly virtuous and amiable. Some of the most violent enemies to his pretensions, as acting under the immediate authority of Heaven, have, however, acknowledged the excellence of his conduct, as a man; and scarcely has any petulance,

or

or malevolence, dared to breathe a whisper against his wisdom, fortitude, and benevolence. We might here pause to observe, that a character so singular, yet so interesting, so exceeding the ordinary course of nature, yet so perfectly compatible with it, must have been drawn from the life: scarcely could any human imagination have drawn such a character from the stores of its own invention, and certainly not the imagination of the sacred historians. However that may be, it must be admitted that the description they have given of their master, is splendid and original, and calculated to raise in the minds of their readers, no other sentiments, but those of love, and awe, and admiration. But the Apocryphal writers have shewn themselves so little expert in their trade of fiction, that they have described this exalted character in a manner, suited only to a vain and petulant boy, exerting his miraculous powers from silly ostentation, or for the worse purpose of gratifying some malignant passion. This is a subject upon which it would be painful to dwell, if we did not recollect that, by exposing error, we are promoting the cause of truth. Amidst a variety

riety of similar instances, the following doubtless will appear quite sufficient to verify my observation.

ALIO die, cum vesperi Dominus Jesus cum Josepho domum reverteretur, obviā habuit puerum, qui cursu rapido concitatus, impellebat ipsum, ut caderet. Cui Dominus Jesus; Quemadmodūm me impulisti, ita cades, neque surges: eādēmque horā corrūt puer, et exspiravit. — — — Ad alium deinde magistrum doctiorem eum deduxerunt, qui ut eum conspexit, dic Aleph, inquit. Cūmque dixisset Aleph, Magister ipsum Beth pronunciare jubebat. Cui respondens Dominus Jesus, dic mihi, inquit, priū significationem literæ Aleph, et tunc Beth pronunciabo. Hic cūm sublatâ manu eum verberaret Magister, confestim manus ipsius exaruit, et mortuus est. Tunc dicebat Josephus Divæ Mariæ: ab hoc tempore non sinemus eum domo exire; quoniam quisquis ipsi adversatur, morte plectitur *.

We may add also, that in the writings and in the sayings, attributed to Jesus through error, or a less pardonable cause, there are no traces of that wisdom, which drew from

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* Vid. Evangel. Infant. capp. 47. and 49.

the mouth of his adversaries that remarkable acknowledgement, “Never man spake like this man* ;” but we meet with puerile allusions, obscure expressions, and mystical conceits, characteristic only of those intellects, by which they were obtruded upon the world †.

SUCH are the compositions which attempted to gain credit, as the real productions of the Apostles and Evangelists; and so striking is the contrast between *them* and the genuine writings, whose style they have so unsuccessfully endeavoured to imitate. It deserves the most serious consideration of every one, who is unhappily prejudiced against Christianity, or (what is almost as fatal) who has hitherto not thought the subject

* John vii. 46.

† Vid. Fabric. de Scriptis Christo tributis, and De dictis Christi à p. 303. ad p. 337. Among other forgeries is a curious Epistle, purporting to have been sent from heaven by our Saviour, equally barbarous in style, and despicable in materials. Moneo vos per Epistolam istam, ut in Ecclesiis meas nullus sit, non vir, non mulier, qui præsumat fabulare aut verbosare aut sedere aut ante Missa egredere, donec compleantur solemnia, anathema sit Et postea Adam de limo terræ plasmavi et Die Dominico sanctificavi et dedi requiem in ipso, ut bene agant et sine pressurâ sint et requiescant per omnia. — pp. 311, 312.

subject worthy his attention, whether, if the Canonical books of the New Testament had been the productions of artifice or delusion, they would not have resembled those, which are avowedly so, in some of their defects. Supposing it, for a moment, to be a matter of doubt, by whom the Canonical books were written; or allowing them the credit, which is granted to all other writings having the same external authority, that of being written by the authors whose names they have always borne; upon either of these suppositions, the writers of the New Testament could not, either in situation or attainment, have had any advantages, humanly speaking, which the authors of the Apocryphal books were not as likely to have possessed as themselves: consequently, if the first books had been founded upon the basis of fiction, it is surely most probable, that subsequent attempts would have equalled, if not improved upon, the first efforts of imposture. If, however, it appears upon a candid and close investigation, that one set of compositions betrays no proofs of a design to impose upon others, and no marks that the authors were themselves deceived; while on the contrary, the others evince,

evince, in every page, the plainest symptoms of mistake and fraud; is it fair, is it reasonable, to ascribe to a common origin productions so palpably and essentially different? or rather, is it not more just, and even philosophical, to respect truth in those performances, which bear the fair stamp of her features; and to abandon those, and those only to contempt, which have indubitable traces of imposture?



CHAPTER II.

ON THE PROOF ARISING FROM THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE JEWS.

Peculiarities in the character of the Jewish people.—Prophecies concerning the Messiah.—Expectations formed in consequence of them.—Appearance of false prophets.—In what manner Jesus appeared, in the character of the expected Messiah.—His conduct and doctrine.—Gospel, how preached after his death.—The Christian religion not founded in imposture, or enthusiasm.—The actions of Jesus considered with reference to each of these suppositions.—Jewish zealots.—Inference from the foregoing facts.—Recapitulation.

IT is an undoubted fact, that the Jewish Nation has, from the earliest ages, received the books of Moses, and the writings comprehended under the name of the Old Testament, as of divine authority; and that it has regarded them, as containing an authentic narrative of transactions, and an inviolable rule of faith. Nor is it less certain, that the disciples of Moses were distinguished from all the other inhabitants of the earth, before the publication of the Christian religion,

gion, by this particularity of opinion and conduct, and by other peculiarities, founded upon, or proceeding from it. The important advantages which they conceived themselves to enjoy, as the chosen people of God, raised them so high in their own estimation, that they looked down with contempt upon all their fellow creatures: from the superior purity and correctness of their notions respecting the Deity, they entertained an aversion to every species of Polytheism: and the strict and repeated injunctions, contained in their laws, prohibiting all communication with idolaters, caused them by degrees to imbibe a most unsocial and illiberal fear of polluting themselves, by any intercourse with the nations of the earth *.

AMONGST

* Nec illud omittendum videtur, à Judæis, non eos tantum à quibus læsi essent ullo modo, sed omnes etiam idololatras in hostium numero esse habitos. Unde ab alienigenis adeò liberalitatem suam arcebant, ut ne communia quidem humanitatis officia illis præstarent, quale est viam monstrare comiter. Juvenal. Sat. xiv. 103. Rosenmuller. ad Matth. v. 43. To the same effect Mosheim expresses himself. Humanitatis et amoris officia nullis sese debere putabant, nisi aut sanguinis et naturæ, aut religionis faltem et sacrorum communitate secum junctis: in quo modum omnem ita excedebat, ut summis alienigenas injuriis afficeret, sibi licitum ducerent, et omnem eorum consuetudinem et convictum, quantum possent, fugerent. Quapropter non immerito à Græcis et Romanis odii generis humani postulabantur. De Reb. Christian. ante Constantin.

AMONGST the writings, esteemed by the Jews to be of divine authority, there were many, which they considered as prophetic of future events. In the classification of the writings held sacred by them, a place was expressly assigned to those of the prophets: nor were there any, which they appear to have studied with more assiduity or eagerness. In consequence of the numerous and marked intimations, which some of these prophetic writings conveyed, a general expectation prevailed, that a personage was to be born among them, to execute various purposes of favour, and kindness to their nation: and this personage was looked for under the name of the Messiah, or, the Anointed of God. That he was to be possessed of considerable power, and achieve some remarkable deliverance for them, was confidently pronounced to be the sense of these prophecies. And so persuaded were they of the truth of this interpretation, and such anxiety did it occasion, that a notion
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Constantin. p. 40. See Elsner. Observat. Sacr. in N. F. libb. in Epist. i. ad Thess. ii. 15. See also the precept of a Jewish doctor, quoted by Echoettgenius in his Horæ Hebraicæ ad Matt. v. 43. *Noli gentilibus benevolentiam aut misericordiam exhibere.*

was spread very generally among the heathens* also concerning some great character, who was about to rise in the eastern part of the world, and attain universal dominion. The testimony of heathen historians satisfactorily confirms this fact; though the hopes, excited by the circumstance amongst the heathens and the Jews, tended very naturally to different, nay, opposite conclusions. The other nations looked only for a master of the Roman world: the Jews impatiently expected a Prince, who should subject that empire to the Jewish yoke†. For it is here of importance to collect, what the general sentiments of the Jews‡ were, respecting the character and conduct of this extraordinary

* This is evident, not only from the well known passages in Tacitus and Suetonius, but from the words of Celsus also, which are cited by Lardner, Works, Vol. I. p. 133.

† There is a very remarkable passage in Josephus upon this point, quoted and commented upon by Lardner. When the city was actually taken, he says: "But that which principally encouraged them to the war, was an ambiguous oracle, found also in their sacred writings, that about this time some one from their country should obtain the empire of the world. This they understood to belong to themselves; and many of the wise men were mistaken in their judgement about it: for the oracle intended the government of Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor in Judæa." De Bell. Jud. lib. vi. c. 5. sect. 4. ap. Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 54.

‡ This subject is handled in a masterly manner by Dr. White. Bampton Lecture, pp. 112—134. See also pp. 225—233.

extraordinary personage, at the time, when Jesus of Nazareth assumed to himself the title and office of Messias.

FROM an examination of the prophetic writings, and of the interpretations affixed to them by Jewish commentators, it appears that the Messiah was represented under the titles of a prince, a judge*, and a shepherd †: that

* See the passages quoted by Orobio in his friendly conference with Limborch, in the treatise written by the latter upon that occasion, *de Verit. Christianæ Relig.* Goudæ, 1687. p. 7. *Futurus erat Rex,* (is Orobio's comment upon these texts) *Judex, pastor: Israel vero neque regem vidit, neque Judicem, neque pastorem: de regno spirituali in cœlo, de Judice in cœlo prater Deum, de pastore in cœlo, nunquam à Deo admonitus,* p. 8. See Limborch's reply to this reasoning, pp. 19—22. The objections of Orobio are repeated p. 53. and again confuted p. 192. &c. I am the more desirous of referring my reader to these arguments of Orobio, because they represent the opinions of the unbelieving Jews, at the time of our Saviour, as well as in every age which has succeeded that period. Who can forbear exclaiming with St. Paul, that “blindness in part has happened to Israel?” Rom. xi. 25.

† I would observe, that this imagery, taken from pastoral life, has found it's way into other languages; and seems to have continued even in those times, when composition, as well as manners, became refined. Hence the metaphor in Homer, *ποιμὴν λαῶν*—and the comparison (Il. Γ. 196.) *Αὐτὸς δὲ, κτίλος ὡς ἐπιπωλεῖται σίχας αἰρέων.* Pindar has

— *πλεύτος ὁ λα-*

-χῶν ποιμένα ἵπακτὸν ἀλλότριον. Ol. x.

And in the ode immediately following, uses *ποιμαίνω* in a sense equally figurative. Horace has complied with his master's practice in this respect;

Regum timendorum in proprios *greges*,
Reges in ipsis imperium est Jovis.

that he was to be descended from David, upon whose throne he was to sit, and that he was to possess a kingdom, which should comprehend both Jews and Gentiles.

THESE descriptions they applied in a literal sense; and as the blessings promised under the law, were chiefly of a temporal nature, they interpreted in the same manner the passages, which announced the future glories of the Messiah's kingdom. They expected in consequence of these prophecies, a deliverer from present, temporal evils: a mighty prince and conqueror, who was to exceed the power of his great ancestors, David and Solomon, and not only to free the chosen people of God from the yoke under which they laboured, but to subject the other nations in their turn to the Jewish yoke. Above all, they expected him to confirm the sanctions of the Mosaic law, and to continue its splendid, though cumbersome*, ritual. Indeed a rooted attachment to the customs and ceremonies of their forefathers, and the belief of their unceasing efficacy, so steadfastly clung to the mind of every

* See Orobio ubi suprà, pp. 95, 115, and Limborch, pp. 305, 332, &c.

every Jew, that he could not separate them from the idea of a prophet sent from God, charged with the delivery of peculiar blessings to his people.—An union of the prophet and the prince, formed, in their judgement, a necessary part of the character of their Messiah: but still the prophetical, as well as princely, office, according to their mistaken interpretations, was to be subservient to temporal purposes.

It deserves moreover to be remarked, that the situation in which the Jews were placed, at the period of their history to which we refer, (which was during the reign of Augustus) not only made them expect the Messiah with considerable impatience, but increased their natural propensity to interpret the prophetic declarations in a manner strictly literal. For they were in a state of bondage to idolatrous* governors, a circumstance humiliating at all times to those, whose ancestors had received such signal marks of God's peculiar favour; and particularly so, when the pride and rigour of the Pharisees, and other leading men of the nation, carried to it's greatest height, a bigoted and unsocial spirit, to which,

* See Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 54.

which, by mistaking and perverting the plain injunctions of their law, they had so long habituated themselves, as to render it a prominent feature in their national character. In this sense of deliverance from the Roman yoke, they looked for a deliverer and a redeemer: in this sense they expected a prince, who was to wrest the sovereignty from their present powerful masters: and in this favourite sense of subjugation to their temporal authority, and of obedience to the Mosaic ritual, did they view the awful declarations concerning the extent of the Messiah's kingdom among the Gentiles.

THERE cannot be a plainer proof of the fact, that such an expectation was generally entertained by the Jews at that particular time, and that such was the train of ideas by which that expectation was accompanied, than that a variety of persons, at this very period, assumed to themselves a title and character corresponding with those notions. This of itself is a very important historical fact, and it occurs frequently in the narrative of the transactions of those times. For at what period may we ask, in the history, not of any other, but of the Jewish nation, did so many persons appear,

assuming to themselves the title and office of a Messiah, but at the times immediately preceding the ministry of Jesus Christ, and subsequent to it? Such however is the historical fact. "The numerous false Prophets and false Christs of whom Josephus speaks so frequently, and so distinctly, are full proofs of it*,"

THE prevailing expectation of a deliverer from the yoke of the Romans, induced many a bigoted enthusiast, and many a factious impostor, to place himself at the head of the credulous multitude. The character they assumed, and the promises they held out to their followers, uniformly agreed with the popular prepossessions, and favoured the national hopes. Freedom from an idolatrous yoke, and the triumph of the Mosaic law, were sounds that never vibrated in the ears of a Jew, without rousing him to immediate action. And such was the general infatuation, that, although each successive pretender disguised himself in the same mask, and inspired the same hopes; the same eager, but disappointed, hopes; still so confident were the expectations of the people, and so anxious their wishes, that

followers

followers were never wanting to the banner of sedition and imposture.

A SHORT view of the conduct of some of these false prophets*, and of their pretensions, will distinctly mark the difference of character between them and the true Messiah, and shew what were the grounds, upon which alone the pretenders to the prophetic character could build their expectations of success.

"WHILST Fadus was procurator of Judea," (says Josephus) "a certain impostor called Theudas, persuaded a very great multitude, taking their effects along with them,

to

* It is of importance to transcribe from Lardner, some observations of Abp. Tillotson, and of Grotius, concerning these false prophets. "Josephus", says the former, "mentions several of these; of whom, though he does not expressly say that they called themselves the Messias, yet he says that which is equivalent—that they undertook to rescue the people from the Roman yoke. Which was the thing which the Jews expected the Messias would do for them. And therefore we find that the disciples, who were going to Emmaus, and knew not that Christ was risen, and were doubtful what to think of him, say: *We hoped this had been he that should have delivered Israel*: that is, they hoped this had been the Messias; that being, it seems, a common periphrasis of the Messias, that he was *he that was to deliver Israel*." Vol. III. p. 552. "Christi nomine populus Judaicus intelligebat vindicem libertatis. Nam illud, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡλπίζομεν, ὅτι αὐτός εἴτε δὲ μέλλων λυτρεσθαι, τὸν Ἰσραὴλ, descriptio est nominis Christi. Quare quicumque se missos divinitū liberatores populi Judaici dicebant, eo ipso Christos se profitebantur, et erant θεοδόχεισοι, &c." Grot. in Matth. xxiv. 5. Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 59.

to follow him to the river Jordan; for he said he was a prophet, and that, causing the river to divide at his command, he would give them an easy passage over. By these speeches he deceived many. But Fadus was far from suffering them to go on in their madness; for he sent out a troop of horse, who coming upon them unexpectedly, slew many, and took many prisoners. Theudas himself was among the latter; they cut off his head, and brought it to Jerusalem*."

"BUT the Egyptian false prophet brought a yet heavier disaster upon the Jews. For this impostor coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thousand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderness up to the mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jerusalem, and having beaten the Roman guard, to bring the people into subjection to him, and govern them by the help of his armed associates. But Felix, coming suddenly upon him with the Roman soldiers, prevented the attack: and all the people joined with him in their

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* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. xx. c. 5. sect. 1. Lardner places this event in the year of Christ 45, or 46.

own defence, so that when they came to engage, the Egyptian fled, followed by a few only. A great number of those who were with him, were either slain or taken prisoners. The rest of the multitude being scattered, shifted for themselves as they could *."

In another place he says, "The country was again filled with robbers and impostors, who deceived the people." And soon afterwards, "Now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God †." And again, "Deceivers and impostors, under a pretence of divine inspiration, aiming at changes and innovations, made the people mad; and induced them to follow them into the wilderness, pretending that God would there give them signs and wonders ‡."

SUCH

* Joseph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 13. sect. 5.

† Antiq. Jud. lib. xx. c. 8. sect. 5, 6.

‡ De Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 13. sect. 4. See other passages to the same effect in Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 58. See also Newcome's observations on our Lord's conduct, p. 203, &c. Basnage's Hist. des Juifs, c. vi. sect. 10. Edit. 1707.

To shew the immutability of the Jewish character in every situation, the obstinacy with which they continue to adhere

SUCH then appear to have been the peculiar opinions, and the eager expectations of the Jews, just before the coming of Christ. A rigid, inflexible attachment to the Mosaic law, the obligation of which they conceived to be perpetual; an inordinate conceit of their own superior merit, in

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to the favourite, but erroneous, ideas of their ancestors, and the readiness with which they listen to every enthusiast who flatters their hopes, I subjoin a short account of another impostor, who appeared about 400 years afterwards. "He pretended to be a second Moses, sent to deliver the Jews who dwelt in Crete, and promised to divide the sea, and give them a safe passage through it. They assembled together, with their wives, and their children, and followed him to a Promontory. He then commanded them to cast themselves into the sea. Many of them readily obeyed him, and perished in the waters; and many were taken up, and saved by fishermen. Upon this, the deluded multitude would have torn the impostor to pieces." Jortin's remarks on Eccles. History, Vol. II. p. 352. The same learned author has preserved an account of twenty one successive enthusiasts, who, since the destruction of Jerusalem, have sported with the credulity of the Jews. The pretensions were similar in all; their means of success at first the same; namely, their coinciding with the passions and views of the disciples of Moses; and their ultimate failure of success was also the same. They could not realize the character they laid claim to. The observation with which Jortin closes this account, is well worth our notice. "It may seem strange that they should have rejected Christ, who gave them so many proofs of his mission, and yet should follow every impostor, who pretended to be the Messiah without offering any sufficient or even plausible evidence of it. The reason is plain: Our Saviour, by not setting up a temporal kingdom, dashed all their worldly views at once; but the other claimers of the title of the Messiah began with promises of delivering them from their enemies; and restoring them to their country and lost liberties." Ibid. p. 378.

the sight of God, and a proportionate contempt for all other nations. They were in almost daily expectation of a chosen prophet from heaven, who should be armed with power to deliver them from their enemies, assert the superiority as well as permanence of the Mosaic institutions, and extend, over all the world, the empire of the sons of Abraham. These opinions and expectations, it must be remembered, were rivetted with the greater force, and indulged with the less scruple, as they conceived them to be founded upon the will of the Almighty; and consequently that their opinions could not be wrong, nor their expectations frustrated. Nor were these the casual sentiments of the vulgar and unthinking, or the laboured interpretations of the studious only; but they were the collective and unanimous sentiments of the whole body of the people; insomuch that there probably were but few, sufficiently enlightened, and sufficiently unprejudiced, not to participate in them*.

HAVING taken a view of the opinions that prevailed universally among the Jews,
let

* See this argued and proved by Mosheim, de Reb. Christianor. ante Constantinum, p. 40.

let us consider, what are the leading features of the conduct pursued by Jesus, and what the distinguishing marks of the religion which he published, in the character of their long expected Prophet and Messias. The scheme of this religion was certainly developed very slowly, nor was it fully unfolded till some time after his death; but I shall endeavour to place it before my readers, as nearly as I can, in the way in which it was gradually laid open.

THE first important fact which forces itself upon our observation, after perusing the magnificent descriptions of the person and office of the Messiah, and comparing them with the received interpretations of the age in which Jesus appeared, is, the humble and lowly manner in which he was ushered into the world. His reputed father exercised a mean occupation; he was born in the stable of an inn*; his abode was at

Nazareth,

* I use these terms, because there are no words in our language, which correspond accurately with *παρδοχήσιον* and *κατάλυμα*. Dr. Campbell has explained them very satisfactorily, from Busbequius, in his notes on Luke ii. 7. It appears then, that Mary was delivered in a place (inferior, in point of accommodation, to what is known under the name of Caravansary) in which travellers and their cattle were under the same roof, and not separated by any partition-wall from each other. Whether *φάτην* means "a wooden manager,"

Nazareth, in a part of Judea of the worst repute; his life was passed in privacy; nor till the age of thirty years, is he recorded, but upon one occasion, as having at all distinguished himself.

THE next thing deserving of notice is the spirituality of his kingdom, and of the blessings which it was to diffuse: which was plainly intimated in the very outset of his ministry, although not distinctly understood by his followers.

ANOTHER, and most remarkable circumstance, is the superiority which Jesus asserted over Moses, and this too, in the very commencement of his ministry. We find him not only extending the sanctions of the moral law, delivered by that prophet, but expressly altering some of his regulations*. In the same discourse, he reprehends and counteracts the unsocial and illiberal spirit of the Jewish people; instructing and commanding them, that, so far from shewing

ger," or whether, as Bp. Pearce supposes, it means one "made of coarse cloth, like those out of which the horses of our troopers are fed, when encamped in the field", is a question not very material.

* Compare Matth. v. 27, 31, 32. and xix. 8, 9. with Deut. xxiv. 1. and Matt. v. 38, 39. with Exod. xxi. 24, Levit. xxiv. 20. and Deut. xix. 21.

ing animosity against strangers, they should love their very enemies. He pointedly condemned the external religion practised in his days, and discountenanced the mere ritual observances, in which chiefly consisted the religion, which was valued or enjoined by the degenerate followers of Moses. He distinctly and authoritatively affirmed the sum of the law and the prophets to consist in this: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” Not long after this, he expressly declared the admission of the other nations into his kingdom, to the exclusion of the unbelieving Jews: a doctrine, confirmed indeed by the evidence of subsequent facts, but at the time when it was first delivered, very new, and very offensive to his followers.

By adopting language, and mixing in society with a frankness and unreservedness, disgusting to the feelings, and contrary to the practice, of his countrymen, he excited the surprise of the well meaning disciples of John, and roused the indignation of the formal and rigid Pharisee. Indeed, he never declined the society of publican or sinner, of Gentile or Samaritan : he even studiously embraced every opportunity of marking with disapprobation,

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the national and local prejudices, so prevalent amongst the Jews: and whenever he saw a spirit of docility and of sincerity, he gladly dispensed his instructions “without respect of persons.” Upon such occasions, when the great and substantial ends of his divine mission could be promoted, however he might excite suspicion, or inflame rancour, against himself, he disdained to practise the harsh and uncharitable maxims of bigotry towards any one, whose employment, country, or religion should unfortunately subject him to the imputation of oppression, schism, or profaneness. It is recorded also, that in the course of his ministry, he chose twelve persons, to be in a more especial manner his followers, and disciples. Nor perhaps could he have struck at the very root of the generally received opinions concerning the Messiah more directly, than by the choice of associates *, mean in their circumstances, humble, and even vilified in their occupation; and destitute both of talents, and knowledge. Such associates were little suited to promote the views of a prince and a conqueror; and the selection of them was plainly a renunciation of

* See Newcome's Observations, &c. p. 401.

of that pomp and distinction, which were generally conceived to be essential to the character of the restorer of Israel. To convey indeed to these his companions, a juster notion of his pretensions, and his destination; and to guard them from entertaining any hope of worldly prosperity or comfort, in consequence of being thus preferred to their countrymen, he expressly warned them of the persecutions they must undergo, and enjoined them strictly "not to fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*."

UPON another occasion, he incurred the charge of violating the sabbath; and instead of making any effort to pacify the leading men, who were aiming at his destruction, he censured them in the most pointed and indignant terms. And whereas his adversaries frequently importuned him to shew some sign † from Heaven, in order to convince them, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he was the Deliverer and Prince they expected, he constantly refused to comply with their demand; and thus afforded them a specious

* See Matt. x. 28, 34, 38.

† Matt. xii. 38. xvi. 1—4. Mark viii. 12. John ii. 18. See Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 54. Newcome, p. 296.

specious argument* for continuing to deny the validity of his pretensions, because he did not represent the character of the Mef-sias in a manner, corresponding with their erroneous and short-sighted notions. Upon various occasions afterwards, we find him, in the most open and direct manner, discountenancing the doctrines † and the practices of the leading men of the Jewish sects. But lest he should seem to disgust only his avowed enemies, whose favour he could not acquire, and whose resentment he could not increase, we find him pursuing the same im-politic

* The Scribes and Pharisees, no doubt, urged this argument very triumphantly in defence of their unbelief, and the modern Scribes and Pharisees, may, perhaps, find in it as potent a piece of logic, as any in the records of scepticism. Our Lord performed miracles, sufficient, one would think, in number, importance, and publicity, to have justified his extraordinary claims. But because he did not exhibit a particular sign, at a particular time, and place, at the request of his rancorous opponents, they insulted, renounced, and destroyed him. It is difficult to say, where the demands of unbelievers would stop, if our Lord had indulged the petulant and unreasonable desires of the primitive infidels. Miracles might be called for in every age, by every individual, with equal reason, and, if granted, would then lose their very character and efficacy. Since, however, this fact *appears* to supply an argument against the divine Mission of Jesus, I would suggest to the consideration of those, who are tempted to employ it, whether, being so often and so unequivocally mentioned, it does not furnish a proof of the ingenuousness and veracity of those historians, in whose writings it is found, and against whose cause, if it have any weight as an objection, it must certainly operate.

† Matt. xv. 2—9.

politic conduct (in a worldly point of view) towards his best friends, and firmest adherents: since he made no scruple of proclaiming to his disciples, the certainty of an event, the most repugnant to their feelings, and the most adverse to their private and public wishes that can possibly be conceived. He distinctly told them, that he was actually to be put to death by the malice of his countrymen, and by the power of the Romans*. He indeed added, that he should rise again from the dead; but that assurance had no effect in relieving the minds of his friends, or rather, they seem not to have believed either the one, or the other, part of the prediction, till events actually confirmed it.

AFTER the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, attended still with circumstances likely to incense the ruling men of the state, he marked, in the language of indignant reproach, the cruelty and disobedience of his countrymen; and foretold their rejection from the favour of God in such plain terms, that “when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them †.” At another time he even avoided the multitude,

* Matt. xvi. 21–23. xvii. 22, 23. xx. 18, 19.

† Matth. xxi. 45.

titude, when they wished to make him a king*, and was so far from encouraging them in any act of resistance to the Roman power, that when the question upon the legality of that power was directly at issue between him and the Jewish rulers†, he authoritatively enjoined them to “render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar’s.”

In order to correct the ideas of his disciples, about the permanency of the Jewish polity, he announced, in plain and express terms, the impending destruction of Jerusalem and it's temple‡: and after some intimations of his approaching fate, still more distinct,

* John vi. 15. He expressly declined the exercise of all temporal authority upon another occasion. “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” Luke xii. 14. But he readily availed himself of the application, as a religious and moral instructor.

† Luke xx. 19, &c. Matth. xxii. 15, &c.

‡ If it be objected, that these denunciations against the Jews were the result of spleen, because his own doctrines were rejected, or his own authority was disputed; be it remembered, that, in the very opening of his ministry he had attacked their prejudices; that through the whole course of that ministry, he varied the mode of his attack as circumstances required; and that, in no possible event, could he employ this opposition, as an instrument of giving effect to imposture. To alienate those whom he meant to deceive, and by deceiving to govern, was to counteract his own purposes, to gratify resentment at the expence of ambition, and to multiply, not followers, by whom he might be obeyed, but foes, by whom he might be crushed.

distinct, we find him overturning the hopes of his followers at once, by his submission to an ignominious death.

SOME short time after the crucifixion of this extraordinary person, it is an unquestionable fact, that his disciples, those, who in the life-time of their master were bigoted and ambitious Jews, devoted their whole lives to anxiety, poverty and pain, for the sake of preaching a spiritual religion: they not only preached to the Samaritans (that hostile and inveterate people, against whom their animosity had been formerly so great) but they also converted heathens, freely admitting them to all the privileges of the gospel; and declared by a solemn edict, that circumcision and an adherence to the Mosaic law were no longer necessary. St. Paul in particular, who had cherished from his infancy the profoundest reverence for the religion of Moses, and had interwoven with it, the erroneous interpretations and intolerant notions of the times, became on a sudden so warmly attached to the cause of Christianity, that he readily undertook the peculiar office of announcing to the Gentiles their deliverance from the ceremonial law. It is also worth our notice, that,

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within a few years after the propagation of the gospel, such Jewish converts to the Christian religion, as were still desirous of conforming to the law of Moses, dwindled down to a small sect, known by the name of Nazarenes*, very inconsiderable both in number and reputation, and scarcely surviving the space of three centuries. Whereas such Jews as remained unconverted, have still preserved the peculiar rites of the Mosaic law, adhered to them with all possible strictness, explained and enforced them by the elaborate comment of their most learned doctors, and transmitted them to their posterity with scrupulous care (as far as the change in their circumstances will permit); and still look for a Messiah†, in the same

worldly

* These Nazarenes, as well as the Ebionites, with whom they have been improperly confounded, are spoken of by Mosheim as, “*sectis, obscuris, exiguis, ingenio et fautoribus destitutis.*” *De Reb. Christian.* p. 333.

† See this opinion at large, in the words of Manasseh Ben Israel, quoted by Limborch, p. 221. So also Maimonides, as cited by Prideaux, Letter to the Deists, p. 137. “The Messias shall come, and restore the kingdom of the house of David to the ancient state of it’s former dominion, and shall rebuild the temple, and gather together the dispersed of Israel; and then shall be re-established the legal rites and constitutions, as in former times; and sacrifices shall be offered, and the sabbatical years and jubilees observed, according to every precept delivered in the law.” See the religious tenets of the Jews (Art. 12.) as stated by Butler in his *Horæ Biblicæ*, p. 90.

worldly and carnal sense with their ancestors, who were contemporary with Jesus.

If such was the conduct, and such were the doctrines of Jesus and his disciples, and if such were the consequences of the religion which they published to the world, it is to the last degree improbable, if not morally impossible, that Christianity should have originated in mistake or artifice. If we consider it as an human scheme, brought about by human agency, it is necessary for us to recollect, that Jesus, being born in Judea, of Jewish parents, and educated in the law of Moses, must have felt from his infancy a profound reverence for that law, and imbibed, with the very air he breathed, a firm conviction of its divine authority, and of its sacred obligation and unchangeableness. It could not be the case with a Jew, as with many of the heathens, that he looked upon the religion of his country as partly, or wholly, untrue; to which he conformed as a matter of state policy; for which, whether

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For the impostors, who have taken advantage of these expectations, see note † p. 79. To which may be added a curious testimony from Vanini. "Venetiis cum essem, novi impurissimum impostorem Hebræum, qui suis persuadebat, Messiam primo vere novâ pluviâ fese demissurum: cum ranunculis, addebam ego." De admirandis Naturæ, &c. Dial. L. p. 360. Lutet. 1616.

any other were substituted, and to which, whether any additions were made, was perfectly indifferent, provided there was a state religion. The Jews unquestionably considered, and still do consider, their religion, as delivered immediately from God; they believed, that the author of the universe watched over it's preservation; and that he punished, or rewarded them, according as they conformed to it's regulations, or disobeyed it's injunctions. With them too, religion was not abstracted from civil concerns, nor from the privacy, or the engagements, of domestic life; it did not stand aloof, as it were, from their ordinary occupations, but it was entwined with their very thoughts, and interwoven with their habits: it mingled itself with the familiarity of social intercourse, and clung to the discharge of every public duty. With them it was education, morality, law, custom, amusement, employment, rivetted by all the ties of habit, enforced by all the sanctions of authority, and combined with all the feelings of prejudice. A Jew wore the mark of his religion in his body: it formed a part of his drefs: it was the subject of his conversation: the object of his pride, and of his affections.

affections. He conceived it's excellence to be equal to it's permanence; the one, as derived from the author of all good; the other, as assured by the promise of truth and omnipotence. He therefore had no more conception that it wanted improvement, than that it would be temporary in it's duration. He was as little disposed to admit the propriety of any alteration in it, as he was to believe, that it's sacrifices could cease, it's ceremonies be abrogated, or it's temple destroyed. For this he willingly encountered the scorn and contempt of the rest of the world; and in defence of it, he was ready to lay down his life.

SURELY then, it may be affirmed, that it never could have entered into the head or heart of a mere Jew, that the law of Moses fell, in any way, short of perfection; that it's ritual injunctions were to be abolished, that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to be utterly done away; nay, that the Gentile was to be admitted to the benefits of the promised kingdom of the Messiah, while some even of the once favoured children of Abraham would be excluded. Far less likely were such ideas to occur to any one, who should take upon himself the title of
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the expected Messiah; whose office was universally believed to be that of restoring and extending the influence of the Mosaic law, and erecting a temporal kingdom, to rule without limitation, and to endure without end.

LET us, however, for a moment suppose it possible, that so wild a thought, so sacrilegious a scheme, should have entered into the mind of Jesus, considering him merely as a Jew; still it is utterly improbable that he should have acted upon it from any motive, by which the conduct of men is influenced, or with any expectation of success. Fraud or error, imposture or enthusiasm, can be the only assignable motives, by which he could have been guided; and it will appear that none of these could operate upon the mind of Jesus, so as to induce him to pursue the course, and to publish the doctrines, he is recorded to have pursued and published.

IN prosecuting this argument, I shall readily grant, that the time, when Jesus Christ appeared, was favourable to the pretensions of an impostor. The numerous train of prophecies, already mentioned, undoubtedly gave the Jews reason to expect the appearance of some prince or prophet.

Their

Their uneasiness under the dominion of Rome, their indignation that the people of God should live in humiliating subjection to profane strangers, added the impatience of desire to the earnestness of expectation. It will, therefore, readily be admitted, that they were disposed to listen to the pretensions of any impostor, who thought fit to assume the character thus anxiously looked for. But these very prophecies, and this very impatience, as they predisposed the body of the people to hearken to the suggestions of a false prophet, operated upon them in a manner directly opposite, when they came to examine the character and pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth. For as the prophecies described the future Saviour, under the title of a prince and a deliverer; as he was to be descended from the royal line of David; their carnal and worldly minds appropriated these descriptions chiefly, if not exclusively, to the pomp and grandeur of temporal authority. Hence the very circumstance, which, at the first glance, appears calculated to promote the success of Jesus, proved in reality to be an obstacle of the most formidable kind. For since the expectation of such a prophet was not a simple and unconnected sentiment, but

but combined with a variety of ideas, arising from associations of the most acknowledged influence upon the human mind ; whoever opposed and contradicted these ideas, virtually pronounced a sentence against himself, in the judgment of his contemporaries, because he did not appear in a manner consonant with their expectations. The ideas so excited had, in fact, acquired a greater hold upon their minds, than the expectation in which they originated : and thus, by a process of thought, not very unusual, they insensibly forgot, that although he did not *seem to be* the character they expected, yet he certainly *might be* the character whom they *ought* to have expected, and whom they ought to have welcomed with Hosannas of exultation, as their King and Redeemer.

IF then Jesus had been an impostor, he would undoubtedly have encouraged, to the utmost, the national prepossessions, and flattered the national pride ; he would have taken care not to offend against any received opinion, or any favourite superstition ; he would have courted the leaders of some prevailing party ; he would probably have allied himself to the Pharisaical sect, with marked and active opposition to the Sadducees ; and secretly, if not avowedly, fomented the general

neral animosity against the Romans. But it would have been utterly impossible for him to assume a character and deportment, which very few indeed, if any, of the Jews at that time, conceived to be the character of the Messiah: it would have been impossible for him to deliver a law, which apparently contradicted, and actually superseded, the law of Moses: and when all the nation looked to the æra of the Messiah's advent, as the period, when they were not only to recover, but even outshine, all their former splendour; it would have been impossible for him to damp the expectations, which he himself must have held in common with the rest of his countrymen, by repeatedly asserting, that in a very few years, an event would take place, by which the institutions of Moses would be abolished, and the Jewish nation reduced to a most deplorable state of misery and bondage. His deportment, in the character thus assumed, would have corresponded with the ideas formed of it, by the nation at large: more especially as such a representation of the character suited the only views he could have had, if his intentions were fraudulent. His object, upon such a nation, must have been worldly power, riches, or renown: consequently, he would have omitted

omitted no art to win the multitude to his purposes; and when he had succeeded so far, as to secure the attachment of any considerable number, he would joyfully have accepted the offer of becoming their king; and would then have erected his standard in opposition to the Romans. In short, he would have conducted himself in the same way as the numerous pretenders to the same character did; he would have acted upon the same principles, and directed his views to the same end. It cannot be said, that, as he had seen the ill success of some of their attempts, he chose to support the character in a different manner; because, the instances of such false pretensions, seem to have occurred but seldom *before* our Saviour's ministry; and we do not find that any one of the numerous pretenders, who started up *afterwards*, was deterred, by such an apprehension, from acting the same part in the same manner with those who preceded them;— and besides all this, it cannot be made to appear, that, in the case of Jesus, any interested or ambitious purpose would have been promoted, by the assumption of a spiritual character and office, and by the erection of a spiritual kingdom.

UNLESS therefore it can be clearly shewn, that some worldly advantage was to be derived from the success of the gospel scheme, it is folly to arraign its author as an impostor; since a man of this character undoubtedly will not undertake a design, of which the expected advantages are not partially, if not wholly, confined to the present state of existence. It will hardly, I conceive, be contended, that Jesus had a view solely to posthumous fame; that, for the sake of this expectation, he endured the pain and the ignominy of the cross; since the only fame which he could obtain, would have been that of a falsifier, and deceiver: a deceiver too of his best friends. The case of Jesus, indeed, stands distinguished from the case of other claimants to the character of the Messiah, by the prophecies, which he repeatedly uttered, of his own resurrection. And surely, the failure of those prophecies, he must have foreseen, would have overwhelmed even his memory with infamy. He would have shared, with other impostors, the danger of death; and he would have incurred, what other impostors did not incur, the aggravated reproach of not rising again, according to his own repeated declarations.

There

There seem then to be no grounds whatsoever, for imputing to Jesus any species of imposture whatsoever.

WITH as little shadow of reason can the imputation of enthusiasm be fixed upon the character of Jesus. Had he been an enthusiast, and particularly be it observed, a Jewish enthusiast, he would necessarily have carried the national pride, bigotry and superstition, to a greater height than the rest of his countrymen. He would have been a strenuous assertor of the perfection and immutability of the law of Moses; his zeal would have been enflamed against the schismatical Samaritans, and the idolatrous Romans; he would have encouraged opposition to Cæsar; no charge of violating the law, of profaning the sabbath, of hostility to the temple, would have been brought against him, and never would he have associated with Publicans and sinners.

I HAVE taken occasion to remark the appearance of a variety of persons, who falsely assumed the character of Prophets, about the time when Jesus appeared; and the contrast between *their* conduct and *his*, is undoubtedly favourable to his pretensions as the true Messiah. It is remarkable, that the same age produced also a considerable number

number of persons, against whom the charge of enthusiasm was, at the very time of their appearance, universally and properly alleged. Now, when we are endeavouring to discover, how far such a principle can be justly ascribed to Jesus, it is surely reasonable to examine, in what manner they conducted themselves, upon whom the imputation has been cast with justice and propriety. Such was the number of the persons alluded to, and such the uniformity of their principles and conduct, that they pass under the well-known appellation of Zealots; and they are reckoned, by the Jewish historian, as a separate and distinct sect of his countrymen*. The leading principle of these men was excessive devotion to the law of Moses, to the permanence of the Jewish religion, and the independence of the Jewish state. They acknowledged no Master, but God †: and considered it as a crime to pay any tribute to the Romans, or to submit in any way to the ignominy of a foreign and idolatrous yoke. When once they had adopted these principles, (which at first might be considered only as a national

* Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 1. sect. 6. See Lardner's remarks upon this, Vol. I. p. 218.

† Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, Tom. I. partie 2. p. 49^o. 12mo. à la Haye, 1716.

a national way of thinking) as justifiable grounds of action; and had distinguished themselves from the rest of the people, by their eagerness and zeal in manifesting them, they were insensibly carried on to the perpetration of the most atrocious crimes, and at length precipitated the nation into the very ruin, which at first they vainly endeavoured to avert*.

THESE facts are incontestable; they are also perfectly natural. The fatal consequences of this mistaken zeal are exactly what might have been expected from the religious bigotry and national pride of the Jews, inflamed into action by an ardent enthusiasm in times of general difficulty and danger. But how different is

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* Il n'y eut point de crime, que ces gens-là ne commirent sous prétexte de recouvrir la liberté, et de la procurer au peuple. Basnage, ib. p. 494.

See Hammond on Matth. x. 4. and Newcome, pp. 231—233. See also some remarks on the licence allowed to Zealots, in the text and notes of Lardner, Vol. I. p. 60.

“ The other part of a spiritual worship (says Jeremy Taylor) is a fervour and a holy zeal of God’s glory, greatness of desire, and quickness of action; of all this the Jews were not careful at all, excepting the *zealots* amongst them, and they were not only fervent, but inflamed; and they had the earnestness of *passion* for the holy *warmth of religion*; and instead of an earnest *charity* they had a cruel *discipline*, and for fraternal *correction* they did *destroy* a sinning Israelite: &c.” ENIATTOΣ, Serm. xii.

For this quotation I am indebted to the Notes upon Dr. Parr’s Spital Sermon.

the conduct of these rash zealots, these fiery enthusiasts, from *his*, who rebuked his disciples, when they would have called down fire from Heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritans! from *his*, who, instead of promoting such scenes of blood and devastation, wept over the miseries, which this intemperate and misguided zeal was bringing upon his country! from *his*, who was so far from acting in rebellion against Cæsar, under the pretence of consulting the honour of God, that he publickly exhorted the Jews “to render under Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s!” who preached a religion, which superseded the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, rendered circumcision inefficacious, and confounded the once vaunted distinction between Jew and Gentile! If a principle of enthusiasm for the religion of their fathers, if a devoted attachment to the honour of their nation, led the mistaken Jews to such enormous lengths of cruelty and phrensy, while, in every action, they betrayed some symptom of the national prepossession, how cautious ought we to be, whether we wish to be considered as candid, or as rational men, in

fixing

fixing such a stain upon the character of Jesus, who, in the whole course of his life, in every word and in every action, pointedly and convincingly refuted it.

His conduct being the very opposite to that, which might have been expected from such a principle of action, it is almost unnecessary to appeal to the whole tenour of his precepts; which, however, are of themselves sufficient to repel the imputation of enthusiasm. Besides, no character ever appeared in the world, upon which it would be so difficult to fix the charge of enthusiasm, as that of Jesus Christ. Calm, dispassionate and sedate, he steadily pursued the great objects of his mission, amidst the misconceptions of his followers, and the opposition of his foes. In success never elated, in discouragement never desponding; in danger and in suffering equable and patient, neither in language, nor in conduct, does he betray the ungovernable warmth of fanaticism. If his indignation be awakened, it is mixed with pity; and the objects of it are those persons, who, if he had been a Jewish enthusiast, would probably have obtained his commendation, the Scribes and Pharisees. Even in the transactions in the

O temple,

temple, where he assumes the awful character of a Minister of Divine Vengeance, we observe and applaud the warmth of his zeal, but we cannot descry the extravagance of enthusiasm. Besides, it is unlikely that a Jewish zealot would have discovered much to blame, and still less to punish, in the proceedings of men, whose professed object it was to accommodate the devout followers of the Mosaic law, and at the same time to shew their contempt for Gentile worshippers, by making the place of their worship a place of Jewish merchandise *.

If

* This seeming act of violence bears a stronger appearance of enthusiasm, than any other recorded in the life of our Lord; but it is accompanied by peculiar circumstances, which enable us, not merely to repel from it any vague charge of enthusiasm, but to shew the entire consistency of it with the general scope of Christ's religion. The scene of the transaction was in the outer court of the temple, into which alone the Gentile proselytes were admitted for the purposes of worship; and which therefore the Jews considered as much less holy than the inner court. Now our Lord, by driving out the Jews from this court, conveyed instruction by the indirect form of action. What was intimated by this action? That the Gentiles should be admitted into the church. Perhaps a Gentile enthusiast would have employed this mode of expressing his meaning—but Jesus, if an enthusiast at all, must be considered as a Jewish enthusiast: and a Jewish enthusiast would have adopted and encouraged all the national prejudices about the inferior sanctity of the outer court, and therefore would have acted in a manner precisely the reverse of that, in which Jesus is said to have acted. See Newcome's Observations on our Lord's Conduct
and

If then Jesus Christ, as a mere Jew, had pretended to the character of a messenger from Heaven, actuated either by error, or by fraud, his opinions and prejudices must, in all important points, have resembled those of his countrymen; and consequently his scheme must have been the very reverse of that, which the Gospel really is. It must have corresponded with the mistaken notions which we find to have prevailed, at that time, in every one of his countrymen, if we assign him the character of an enthusiast: and even if we suppose him an impostor, superior to the narrow views and unreasonable prejudices of the nation at large, still the desire of success must have led him to fall in with their notions, and adopt their sentiments.

THE foregoing observations will enable us to place the pretensions, and the character, of Jesus in a distinct and accurate point of view. For if it was in the highest degree improbable, that any Jew whatsoever should have conceived a scheme, so liberal and

and the passages referred to by him, p. 163. If (as some divines have thought) this transaction were miraculous, it would silence all disputes about the *motives* of Jesus. See Farmer on Demoniacs, p. 293. Note.

and enlightened, so purified from all carnal and gross conceptions, so clear from national prepossessions, and so contrary to the popular wishes, as the Gospel ; if an enthusiast would have endeavoured to add vigour and efficacy to the existing religion ; and an impostor must have wished to cherish existing prejudices ; then the scheme of the Gospel must have been of Divine origin, and Jesus Christ neither enthusiast, nor impostor.

IT may now be useful to recapitulate those particulars, in which Jesus deceived the expectations, and frustrated the views, of his own countrymen ; and which render it so highly improbable, that the Gospel should have originated in man's invention.

VARIOUS prophecies had foretold that an extraordinary character would arise, for the benefit of the Jewish nation in particular, and the world in general. The epithets of a Prince, and a Saviour, which were applied to the future Messiah, were interpreted by the Jews in a worldly sense ; as they were at all times a gross and carnal people ; and fancied themselves exactly in the circumstances, which called for the intervention of a deli-

a deliverer, in their sense of the word. They were in bondage to an enemy, whom they hated; and against whom the least encouragement readily disposed them to rebel. They expected that the Messiah would deliver them from this bondage, restore their religion, with all its ceremonies, to more than its ancient splendour; add a new lustre to their favourite temple, and convert the nations of the world to the Jewish religion, or subject them to the Jewish yoke. As this great personage was, in their opinion, to unite the character of a Conqueror, with that of a Prophet, they expected him to exhibit the dignity of the one, as well as to practise the austerity of the other. Purity of manners, spirituality of worship, and unbounded liberality of doctrine, were the last qualities, which these unbending votaries of the law of Moses seemed to look for, or value.

JESUS Christ at length appeared to assume the title, and execute the office, of the long-expected Messiah. He was born in a part of the country, the most dishonoured and despised: his reputed parents were mean and obscure in their circumstances, though really of royal extraction. He set at nought that

that rigid adherence to the ceremonial law, in which indeed the religion of the Jews at that time almost entirely consisted, and from which alone they assumed to themselves so much merit. He associated with Publicans and sinners: and chose, for the confidential ministers of his high office, the most obscure and illiterate of his countrymen. He inculcated submission to the Romans: he expressly asserted the rejection of the obstinate Jews, and the admission of the believing Gentiles to the privileges of his kingdom: he led the life of a poor destitute, not having where to lay his head: he expressed the most honest indignation against the rich, and the powerful; the interpreters of the law, and the leaders of the sects. He repeatedly incurred the charge of violating the sabbath, and of profaning the dignity of that proud object of their implicit reverence, the temple* at Jerusalem. And finally, what is still more extraordinary, as he excited the displeasure of the Jews, by appearing in a manner inferiour to what they imagined beforehand, so he roused their indignation, by assuming pretensions superiour to what they expected. They expected
the

* See Acts xxi. 28.

the Messiah to be a Prophet indeed, but not "The Holy One of God :" and therefore, when they heard the extent of his claims, they cried out, "By our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." So that in the eyes of this blind people, he seemed to add the outrage of insult to the bitterness of disappointment: though he seemed not to equal in dignity the meanest of the Prophets, he asserted his superiority over Abraham; and though he failed to realize their gross conceptions of the character of the Christ, he assumed the still more extraordinary and more dignified title of the Son of God.

IF any one, after viewing the deep root which national pride and prejudice had taken in the minds of the Jews, after examining the nature of the expectations they had formed, and the manner in which they were disappointed, can still consider the rejection of Jesus by the Jews as a matter incredible or unaccountable, he must have accustomed himself to view the relation of cause and effect with no very accurate eye. Certainly, it was impossible for him to appear in a way more contradictory to their expectations, and to propagate doctrines more

more distasteful to their wishes. An enthusiast could not conceive such a scheme; an impostor could not adopt it; consequently, the Gospel, if preached by a Jew among the Jews, could not originate in human artifice or error, but must have had its source in the unsearchable wisdom, and comprehensive benevolence, of the Almighty Governour of the universe.

To confirm and elucidate these observations, I shall add the following passage from the works of a writer, whose elaborate and extensive enquiries into the origin of our religion, have been eminently serviceable to the Christian cause.

“ THE expectation of the coming of the Messiah, about the time of the appearance of Jesus, was universal, and had been so for some while. But with the idea of a Prophet, or extraordinary teacher of religion, they had joined also that of a worldly king or conqueror, who should deliver the Jewish people from the burdens under which they laboured, raise them to a state of independence, and bring the nations of the earth into subjection to them: and, because our Lord did not perform or attempt this, they rejected and crucified him. If he

he would but have assumed the state and character of an earthly prince, Scribes and Pharisees, Priests and People, would have joined themselves to him, and have put themselves under his banner. Of this we see many proofs in the Gospels. This disposition prevailed to the last. The people therefore, though they had met with many disappointments, when our Lord entered into Jerusalem, in no greater state than riding upon an ass, accompanied him with loud acclamations, and other tokens of respect, saying, ‘ Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is the King, that cometh in the name of the Lord.’ And Jesus, our Lord, not assuming then the character of an earthly prince, was a fresh disappointment, and left deep resentments; which rendered them susceptible of the worst impressions from the chief priests and their other rulers*. And at their instigation
they

* If any one should think this surprising change in the minds of the Jewish populace, too great to be accounted for upon the supposition of their disappointment at our Saviour's conduct, the following considerations perhaps may reconcile him to the facts related in the Gospels. From the accounts of the sacred historians, it appears by no means necessary to suppose, that the persons, who attended Jesus in his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, were the very same as those,

they desired Pilate, the Roman governour,
to set Barabbas at liberty, and crucify Jesus;
with

who prevailed on the Roman governour to release Barabbas
and to crucify Jesus. It is well known, that at the celebra-
tion of the passover, an astonishing number of Jews resorted
to Jerusalem from all parts of the world; so many indeed,
that, according to Josephus, those, who complied with that
important rite of their religion, amounted to three millions
of souls. (Joseph. Bell. Jud. L. ii. cap. 14. sect. 3. L. vi. 9.
sect. 3.) Many of these, being strangers to what was passing
in Judea, were very likely * to adopt implicitly the accounts
of the priests and men in authority; and when they were
told, that an impostor had appeared, who had gained consid-
erable influence over the multitude, and was likely to exert
that influence in opposition to the institutions of Moses, and
the traditions of the elders, it is probable, they would easily
be instigated to desire the death of the supposed impostor.
Nor would such men hesitate in demanding the release of
Barabbas, since they might be ignorant of the extent of his
guilt; or be led (as bigotry and intolerance usually do lead
men) to conceive, that even a robber and a murderer might
be less criminal than an enemy to the existing religion; such
as the King of the Jews was represented to be by his im-
placable enemies. We have therefore only to suppose, that
the priests had procured a sufficient number of these men,
as well as of their own immediate dependants, to fill the
court of justice, and join in the importunate cry for Jesus'
execution. And this supposition agrees very well with the
circumstance of a crowd being assembled at the Prætorium
so early in the morning †, since the apprehension of Jesus
was

* Those, who were accustomed to travel so far in order to comply with the injunctions of the law, were not likely to be behindhand with their countrymen, in the veneration and attachment with which they regarded it. Indeed we have a notable instance of their violent and mistaken zeal in Acts, xxi. 27.

† For the time of these transactions, see Townson's very judicious Discourses &c. p. 250. I am happy also to find this writer concurring in the idea, that "the Jewish rulers had surrounded the tribunal wjth their followers and depen-
dants." Ibid.

with which clamorous and importunate demand he at length complied, still bearing testimony to the innocence of him, whom he unwillingly condemned.

“ The continued expectation of the Messiah as a worldly king and conqueror,
and

was conducted in a very secret manner, and known only to the chief priests, and those whom they saw fit to acquaint with their designs: As to those who had attended Jesus into Jerusalem, it is plain they were not informed of the place of his retirement; they were therefore dispersed in the city, or in the fields adjacent to it. The business of the judicial examination was finished in such haste, that if they had been disposed to interfere, they had not time to concert any measures for that purpose. However, there is no reason to suppose, that any of the other followers of Jesus would have interested themselves in his behalf, since the very disciples had forsaken him. They all acquiesced no doubt, though with sorrow * and amazement, in the sentence which was pronounced upon him: — but a mere acquiescence is more probable, and more easy to be accounted for, than the brutal and outrageous act of compelling the governour to release unto them a murderer, and consign to a cruel death, one, who was so lately the object of their veneration †.

* See Luke xxiii. 27.

† The classical reader will not fail to call to mind the striking description of the change, produced in the expression of the sentiments of the Roman populace at the fall of Sejanus. See Juvenal, Sat. x. 67. 76. &c. But the change was only in the expression of their sentiments, since this insolent favourite was as much the object of their real hatred, when in the height of his power, as in the degradation of his fall. The animated picture, drawn by the satyrift, makes us some amends for the interruption, which time and accident have caused in the Annals of Tacitus, at this very interesting period of history. Yet Brotier has caught successfully the manner of his original. Supplem. ad Lib. V. Annal. capp. xxiv. xxxviii.

and their uneasiness under the Roman yoke, were the immediate occasions of their rebelling against the authority, to which they were then subject; and the same principles that induced them to reject and crucify Jesus, brought upon them their utter and final destruction." Lardner, Vol. vii. p. 60.



CHAPTER III.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES.

How far the Disciples resembled their countrymen.—Who they were.—Address of Jesus to them after they were chosen.—Their ignorance of their Master's real office, and distrust of his power.—Conduct at the transfiguration.—Disposition to interpret the prophecies literally.—Candid representation of their own conduct, a proof of their veracity.—Disputes, who should be the greatest.—Triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.—The last supper.—The garden.—Apprehension of Jesus.—Sentiments and conduct of the Disciples at that event.—Circumstances attending the resurrection.—Disciples at length convinced, boldly preach a crucified Messiah.—How this change is to be accounted for.—Some remnant of their old prejudices and mistakes.—Conversion of Cornelius.—Reflections upon that event.—Edict of the council at Jerusalem.—Conclusion warranted by these facts, and others harmonizing with them.

FROM the deep root which national prepossessions had taken among the Jews, and from the nature of their expectations concerning the Messiah, it ceases to appear extraordinary, that so large a portion of the nation should disregard, or disbelieve, the credentials produced by Jesus in favour of his divine commission. It seems, however, necessary

necessary to inquire into the conduct of those persons, who formed so singular an exception to the generality of their countrymen; by not only readily admitting the testimony of Jesus, but by persevering, in spite of every discouragement, and every danger, to preach to the world at large the doctrines, which Jesus had taught. The motives which shall appear, upon strict inquiry, to have directed their conduct, must assist us in determining how far the Gospel is true: and if their actions shall be conformable to what might be expected from men in their peculiar circumstances; and if they shall themselves be found capable of forming a right judgement of the facts, to which they bore witness, and actuated by no wrong bias whatsoever; we cannot refuse their evidence, as credible and competent witnesses.

Now we should naturally expect, at first, to meet the same sort of opinions, and prejudices, in these men, as in their countrymen. We should expect that these opinions would occasionally appear, and these prejudices often start forth. We should expect to observe marks of disappointment, when their worldly and carnal views of the Messiah

siah were discomfited, and their own hopes, founded upon those wrong conceptions, baffled and crushed. We should expect to find these deeply-rooted prepossessions gradually and slowly worn out of their minds, by the indubitable proofs, which Jesus gave, of his being really the character, which he professed to be: we should expect to see them often returning to the charge, as it were, and then retiring at some fresh exertion of miraculous power; rising again into full strength, when any event occurred, which might seem to confound all their expectations; and not completely subdued, till after a series of divine agency, which no preconceived opinions whatsoever could possibly withstand. In short, we should expect to find them resembling the rest of their countrymen, except in the opportunities they had of observing more narrowly the character and works of Jesus, and in having dispositions, not so inveterately hostile to every species of evidence.

THESE, doubtless, would be our expectations; and if, in the accounts, which are left of the conduct of the more immediate followers of Jesus, we meet with these marks

marks of truth and of nature, we are bound, in reason and in equity, to receive their recorded testimony.

BEFORE we enter upon a minute examination of their conduct, we may observe that Jesus, in the choice of his disciples does not appear to have been influenced by the circumstance of neighbourhood or affinity. One of them, indeed, is called his brother (which is the term for a cousin*, near or remote); but many of the others appear to have been total strangers to him, till they were induced, from what they saw or heard, to pay a more earnest attention to his discourses, and to become the attendants upon his ministry. It is moreover remarkable, that the generality of his kinsmen†, as well as his neighbours, appear to have disputed his right to the title of Messias. When his friends heard of his assuming the public office of a teacher, it is expressly mentioned, that "they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, he is

beside

* This use of the term was not confined to Judea. Ajax, speaking of Achilles, says,

Frater erat: fraterna peto. Ovid. Metam. xiii. 31.

† Bp. Law has some very sagacious observations upon this subject, in a note to his Reflections on the Life and Character of Christ. Vid. p. 304. Edit. 6.

beside himself." We are also told that his "brethren," or relations, "did not believe in him;" and on account of the ill reception, which he met with amongst his neighbours, he has recorded his own conviction of the accuracy of the observation, that a "prophet has no honour in his own country*."

FROM the number of those persons, who were in the habit of attending him, when he assumed the office of a public teacher, we are told that Jesus †, after spending the night in prayer, selected twelve, as the more peculiar and confidential witnesses of his life, and doctrine. With the motives of his choice we are not made acquainted ‡; but all parties will agree, that he selected those, whom he thought most fit for his purpose. Certain however it is, he did not feed their ambitious hopes with any alluring promises, or entice them with any tempting offers; since the discourse he addressed to them, immediately after they were chosen, was only calculated

* Vid. Mark iii. 21. John vii. 5. Matth. xiii. 57. and Luke iv. 24—29.

† Luke vi. 12, 13.

‡ See the choice of such men, as the fittest attendants upon the Divine ministry of our Saviour, vindicated by Bp. Law, Reflections, p. 282, &c.



calculated to alarm their prejudices, and to damp their expectations*. He announces their impending persecution ; reproves worldly anxieties ; rebukes the hypocrisy, and foretells the punishment, of those, to whom they looked up as patterns of religious and moral perfection ; and in express terms, warns his followers of the extreme difficulty of performing the duties, and attaining the rewards, of his dispensation. We are not told that this discourse produced any effect upon the disciples ; it is probable they were far from having a clear conception of it's import ; as indeed their ignorance†, added to their prejudices, incapacitated them from comprehending much of what our Saviour told them, relative to his kingdom, during his life-time. Undoubtedly their faith in him was very far from being settled at this early

* Luke vi. 20—22. Matt. v. 10, 11. and in general, the whole sermon on the mount. See also c. x. 16, &c.

† This ignorance is far from being denied by the Apostles, or their historians. St. Luke plainly admits, that Peter and John were “unlearned and ignorant men.” Acts iv. 13. and the other Evangelists, as well as St. Luke, repeatedly adduce instances of the dulness of their apprehension, particularly concerning the real nature of their master's character and kingdom. See particularly Matt. xv. 16. Mark viii. 15—21. x. 26. Luke ix. 54. xviii. 34. xix. 9—11. John ii. 22. iv. 27—33. vi. 6. x. 6. xi. 12. xii. 16. xx. 9, 25.

early period, since, very soon after, they betrayed the most alarming apprehensions of perishing, even when their master was with them *. "And he saith unto them, why are fearful, O ye of little faith!"

NOTWITHSTANDING it is recorded by the sacred historian, that Jesus had given his disciples abundant proof of his miraculous powers, and had even, for a time, imparted a share to them †, yet we read, in the 14th and 15th chapters of St. Matthew, some notable instances of their distrust and doubts, concerning the extent of his preternatural endowments. And upon these and other circumstances, which are related, freely and without disguise, concerning the miraculous acts to which they were witnesses, it is obvious to remark, that, if the writers of these accounts had been conscious of a design to fabricate, or propagate falsehoods, yet no possible reason can be given; why they should accompany the narrations with an acknowledgment of their own incredulity.

IN

* Compare Luke viii. 23. with Matt. viii. 26.

† This position will be maintained, and the subject discussed, in the following chapter.

IN the 16th chapter of the same Evangelist*, it appears to be intimated, that all the disciples had not fully ascertained, in their own minds, what was the real character of their Master: since only one†, in reply to his question upon that point, described him by his true designation. But immediately afterwards, that same Apostle shewed his utter ignorance of the nature of that designation, and the entire coincidence of his notions, with those of his countrymen, when, in direct opposition to a plain declaration of Jesus, concerning his impending sufferings and death, he replied in a tone of impatience and incredulity: “Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.” A transaction is related to have taken place soon after, which drew forth

* In this investigation, I have adhered to the order of time observed by St. Matthew, as he is generally supposed to be more accurate in this respect, than the others. And, as all the Evangelists agree perfectly in the general representation of the conduct of the Apostles, in adhering principally to one, I represent the sense of all, and gain the advantage of pursuing the inquiry through a more unbroken series of facts. Mr. Whiston indeed objects to the order observed by St. Matthew, but his objections are refuted by the learned and sagacious Mr. Jones, of Tewksbury.

† That Peter, in this instance, hastily gave his own opinion, and not that of the other disciples, appears to me clear, from the particular and pointed address of our Lord to him in reply: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto *thee*,” &c.



forth again, from some of the chosen followers, a fresh proof of their mistaken and ambitious views. It is said, that he was transfigured before three of his disciples: "and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;" as an earnest of his future glory, and as affording some idea of his real grandeur, notwithstanding the humiliated state in which he appeared upon earth. Then did his friends, who were permitted to be witnesses of this circumstance, begin to think that their ambitious hopes were realized, their aspirations after the Messiah's kingdom gratified. And upon this occasion, they shewed the most evident marks of exultation, and expressed the most anxious desire to have the beatific scene prolonged. Peter, who was again the most eager to attract the attention of his Master, and who here undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of his associates*, as well as his own, exclaimed in the language of warm self-congratulation: "Master, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here

three

* This, I think, is apparent, not only from the circumstances which had taken place, but also from the mode of his address: "It is good for *us* to be here; let *us* make" &c.—Lightfoot's note upon this passage is excellent.

three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias."

IT is singular, that this is the only expression of satisfaction, which is recorded as having fallen from the mouth of the disciples, during the ministry of Jesus. We find they were often perplexed, and often distrustful; sometimes disheartened, then anxiously enquiring for the time of their recompence; but we never observe any mark of complete contentment or delight, except upon this occasion*. This behaviour is perfectly consistent with nature, supposing the Gospel true; but upon any other supposition, it is most difficult to conceive, that the circumstance should be invented and told so naturally, or indeed for what purpose it could be invented at all. But to proceed with our enquiry.

IMMEDIATELY after this transporting prospect of future enjoyment, their thoughts are fixed upon the time, when it should be realized; and, in a question, which strongly marks their dependence, on the authority of their earthly instructors, combined with

a reve-

* See however, Luke x. 17. That instance, which is certainly similar to the fact here considered, is to be accounted for upon precisely the same principles.

a reverence for the character of their Master, they wish to have a doubt resolved, which the late occurrence should seem to have suggested, or, at least, called up more directly in their minds; "Why then say the Scribes, that Elias must first come?" And upon this question being answered to their satisfaction, then, and not till then, we are told, that the disciples understood the real character, and office, of John the Baptist.

THE proof* that Jesus was the Messiah, was certainly connected very closely, in the apprehension of the Jews, with the person and conduct of the prophet, his fore-runner; yet, we see, the Evangelist readily acknowledges, that the confidential friends of Jesus were not acquainted with the real character of John, until the time allotted to their Master's ministry had nearly expired: and this too, notwithstanding an express declaration from him, some time before; accompanied indeed with a doubt, whether

the

* This proof is detailed by Dr. Bell, in a volume, replete with accurate investigation, and found argument, entitled, "An inquiry into the Divine Mission of John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, &c." 2d Edit. 1795. The appearance of some such personage, "in the spirit and power of Elias," was considered by the Jews as so essential to the mission of their Messiah, that, when Barchocheba assumed that character, he selected the famous Rabbi Akiba as his precursor. See Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. X. p. 437.

the minds of the disciples were sufficiently enlightened to understand or believe it*. This again shews their disposition to interpret the prophecies literally†, and the doubts that constantly hung over their minds, whether their Master were really the Messiah, or no. On the one hand, it is unlikely they should make no scruple of declaring, that they had so long been ignorant of the character of the Baptist, if they had been concerned in a trick; and if they had been the dupes of their Master's artifice, the previous coming of John the Baptist, would have been the first thing he would have inculcated upon their minds;

since

* Vid. Matt. xi. 14. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

† Upon this subject let us hear the eminently learned Gläss. *Quòd si verò tropicus et figuratus sermo propriè fuit aliquando intellectus, absurdissimarum opinionum monstra id ipsum peperit, ut ex iis, quæ subjiciam, exemplis, manifestum erit.* In ipsâ Christi, ὁμοιωπαθεῖ in his terris nobis facti, scholâ familiari et domesticâ, ruditudinem discipulorum ejus, et præconceptam, de regno Christi terreno, opinionem; inter alia, ortum ex eo sumfuisse certum est quòd vaticinia Prophetarum, quibus illi regnum Messiae magnifice admodùm describunt, et ad illustrandam amplitudinem ejus spiritualem, metaphoris ab externorum regnorum mundi conditione desumptis utuntur, ut propriè, dicta, cum reliquo Judæorum vulgo, intellexerunt: qui error, quām fixè animis ipsorum infederit, et quām difficultè eradicari ab ipsomet veritatis doctore potuerit, historia Evangelica satis apertè commonstrat Philologia Sacra. Francof. et Hamburg. 1653. Præfat. in lib. V. seu, Rhetor. Sacram.

since the Jews believed it to be plainly declared in the prophecies, that “Elias must first come, and restore all things.” Instead of which, we find that it was only at the very conclusion of his ministry, and then incidentally, that the chosen followers of Jesus, became persuaded of the truth of an event, which, in their minds, was necessarily to take place, before any one could establish his claim to the title of Messias.

SUBSEQUENT to the conversation above-mentioned, there ensued a striking proof of the distrust entertained by the disciples concerning the reality, or the extent, of the power, with which Jesus had invested them, and consequently concerning his ability to bestow it. A severe rebuke* of their unbelief is also recorded. This is perfectly consistent with the supposition, that the disciples, finding their Master’s character and conduct very different from what their interpretations of the prophecies, and the general expectations, led them to imagine, frequently allowed themselves to give way to doubts and suspicions concerning him. When, however, those doubts and suspicions

* Matt. xvii. 20. Mark ix. 19.

pitions were completely removed in consequence of his resurrection, it is natural enough, that they should record them, as having once existed. But if they had been leagued with an impostor, they could never have entertained any doubts; and even if we can suppose them to have been at first deceived, and afterwards to have joined in carrying on the deception;—if we look upon them as having been at first the dupes, and afterwards the accomplices, of a fraud;—still, when they had once resolved to act, as if they had no doubt upon the subject, a plausible reason cannot be assigned, why they should publish their former suspicions to the world. In a word, it seems to me in the highest degree improbable, that the narrative of the Evangelists should have appeared in it's present form, unless the facts, there related, be truly represented. Every circumstance may be accounted for, every part of the story harmonizes, if we admit these facts:—if we deny them, we are involved in difficulty and perplexity, and the whole conduct of Jesus and his associates is most inexplicable.

“ At the same time (proceeds the Evangelist) came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who

Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven* ? ”

THIS circumstance occurs very naturally, after the account given of the transfiguration, in the preceding chapter. The thoughts of the disciples, at least of those, who were admitted to the visionary scene of splendour, were turned to the speedy realizing of it; especially as they found, that the fore-runner of the Messiah was already arrived. Whether or no they communicated that transaction to the other disciples, it is natural, that the conversation of all should turn on the speedy approach of the Messiah’s reign. And it is equally natural, that it should be a matter of anxious debate and frequent enquiry among them, who should fill the highest offices in this future kingdom;—which should be the greatest favourite of their Master, when he should assume the name, and exercise the authority, of a temporal ruler. It is also likely, that the three, who had been admitted to such a mark of their master’s confidence, should affect to lord it over the rest; and it is by no means an improbable supposition, made by

* Matth. xviii. 1.

by a learned commentator *, that some among them, such as St. Matthew, because they had exercised a disreputable occupation, or were of meaner parts than the rest, had been too much undervalued and despised by their associates. At all events, the question shews plainly their ambitious views and their worldly ideas respecting the reign of the Messiah ; and it corresponds accurately with the prevailing notions of their countrymen on that head. The rebuke, which they received, is no less consistent with the real character, and uniform conduct, of the true Messiah : but was little calculated to feed the hopes, or indulge the prejudices, of his worldly followers.

STILL, however, this rebuke did not correct their mistaken notions : since, upon a subsequent occasion, when Jesus said to his disciples, “ That a rich man shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of heaven †,” they could not refrain from expressing their astonishment at a declaration, so pointedly hostile to all their prepossessions. “ They were exceedingly amazed, and said, Who then can be saved ? ” That the rich and the powerful, so far from enjoying

* Vid. Westen. ad loc.

† Matth. xix. 23,

joying superior privileges and distinctions in the kingdom, that was to be set up, should even be generally excluded, was a paradox, which they could not explain: and which indeed could not be explained, if the kingdom, to which Jesus alluded, had been of a nature and kind, similar to that, which the disciples expected,—a kingdom of worldly grandeur and temporal happiness. Their impatience to know something, with more certainty, respecting their own destiny, could not any longer be restrained; and, upon this occasion, Jesus, though he explained not the nature of their mistake, yet condescended to encourage their hopes in ambiguous, yet cheering, terms. Notwithstanding the erroneous notions, by which they were led away in common with the nation at large, notwithstanding the ambitious hopes, in which they so eagerly indulged, yet they had shewn a disposition of mind far superior to that of their countrymen. They had, as far as the prejudices of education, and the strong bias of habit would allow, given a convincing proof of their reliance upon Jesus, and their attachment to him; they had “forsaken all, and followed him.” Upon this occasion, therefore,

fore, he manifests his sense of that attachment, and promises to reward it, though in a way, of which they had no distinct conception. He adapted his language to their national ideas, and declared, " Verily, I say unto you, that ye, which have followed me, in the *Regeneration*, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel! * "

IN the twentieth chapter, after he had again solemnly warned them of the fate, which awaited himself, we find a fresh instance of the strong hold, which secular considerations had taken upon the minds of his followers and their friends. The mother of two of his disciples came with her sons, to intreat that they might be promoted to the two greatest offices in the kingdom, which she conceived, (particularly from his late declaration), that he would shortly establish. When the other disciples heard it, they conceived an indignation, as in their circumstances

* Upon this passage, the phraseology of which is highly oriental, consult Lightfoot and Rosenmüller. The latter commentator is, generally speaking, an excellent interpreter of the language of the New Testament, but, like many other scholars upon the Continent, he is too fond of reducing every thing to the level of ordinary occurrence and common apprehension.

cumstances it was probable they would, against the brothers, who had endeavoured to thrust themselves into an higher degree of their Master's favour, and to secure a greater share of worldly elevation, than themselves. Upon this occasion, Jesus again endeavoured to make them understand, that his kingdom was to be essentially different from the kingdoms of the world; and that humility, and mutual benevolence, would be indispensable requisites for attaining any pre-eminence in that, over which he was to preside.

AFTER his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; with the exception of one rebuke *, which they incurred, for not placing sufficient reliance on the extent of his power; they were so elevated by the manner, in which he was received, and by the uncontrolled authority, which he exercised, that they listened to his declarations of the impending destruction of the holy city with implicit faith; and privately enquired of him, when these things should take place, and what should be the sign of his coming †.

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* Matth. xxi. 20.

† Matth. xxiv. 3.

IN this frame of mind they continued, till the instant in which he was delivered, as a criminal, into the hands of his enemies. The plain intimations of his approaching fate they received with wonder and incredulity; and so strong did they feel their attachment, and so ardent their zeal; that, when he told them how soon they would be *offended**¹, and all forsake him, they thought it impossible; and they asserted, in the most positive terms, their resolution to encounter every danger in his cause, and for his sake.

THEIR conduct in the garden, is the conduct of men, surprised at what they saw going forward, yet ignorant of what it meant, and to what it tended. The intimations of Jesus, concerning his approaching sufferings, they doubtless conceived to be designed as a trial of their attachment; which late transactions (particularly the transfiguration, and his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, announcing, as they appeared to do, the speedy

* This word is much too confined and weak in it's signification, to express the full meaning of *σκανδαλίζω*. Schoettgen, in his Novum Lexicon, Lips. 1790. explains *σκανδαλίσθηναι* in Χριστῷ, arreptâ aliquâ occasione è Christi personâ, religione, aut regno, aliisve, quoquo modo ei adhærentibus, fieri ab eo alieniorem, aut etiam planè deficere.

speedy confirmation of their darling hopes,) had so rivetted, that they did not feel it possible for any circumstance to shake or alter it; since they did not now feel it possible, that Jesus could have any other character, than what their own minds represented, as belonging to the Messiah. When therefore a band of soldiers, greatly superiour to themselves in number, appeared in the garden with hostile intentions against Jesus, such reliance did they place upon his power, so little doubt did they entertain, but that he was able, and willing, to extricate both himself and them from the impending danger, that one of their number, Peter, still the most forward and impatient, " drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his right ear*."

But when, to their utter astonishment, their Master made no resistance whatsoever, but submitted quietly to the power of his enemies, and was led away to be interrogated and punished as a malefactor, his disciples, who could not reconcile this with their opinions of the Messiah, nor with the former instances of power, which Jesus had exerted,

* Matth. xxvi. 51. John xviii. 10.

exerted, now found their ardour sink in the same proportion, in which it had before been excited: — those very men, who had lately been so bold and eager in their professions of zeal, all “ forsook him and fled; ” and he, who had been more loud and confident than the rest in his protestations, and more active in the defence of a master, whom he thought capable of defending himself, thrice publickly denied his knowledge of a man, for whom, and with whom, he had so lately sworn to die*.

SURELY this is a natural picture of a mistaken and worldly zeal! Warm and impetuous in it's professions of service, no sooner does it discover it's error respecting the source of it's warmth, than it is equally ready to forsake and abandon the former object of it's attachment. Peter and the other disciples confounded their hopes of honour and emolument from a Messiah, such as their own ideas represented, with affection to the person of Jesus: they conceived they had seen such proofs of his being the character they expected, that no room was left in their imaginations for the possibility of a disappointment. Not being able

* Vid. Matth. xxvi. 35, 56, 74.

able to reconcile present appearances with their former notions, in a moment of surprise and dismay, they suffered their prejudiced and selfish views to prevail against their experience and their conviction; and, because they did not understand how the Messiah could be subjected to the power of men, they yielded to the impressions of fear and suspicion, and no longer conceived him to be, what he had declared himself, and what they themselves had believed.

THEY continued in this state of mind, in stupid surprise and abject despondency, without making any effort for the preservation, or at all stepping forward to vindicate the character, of their once venerated Lord, till they saw him actually put to death, and consigned to the grave. They were unable to reconcile the facts, to which they had been eye-witnesses, with the humiliated situation, and ignominious death, of Jesus. They knew not how to account for the marvellous proofs of supernatural agency, which they had seen him display, upon any principle, which would harmonize with that fancied want of power, and of means to

extricate himself from the violence of his enemies, to which alone they conceived his submission owing, at the time of his apprehension. They understood not, for what purpose the Messiah was to undergo such accumulated sufferings; nor could they conceive, how it was possible he should fulfil the ends of his mission by undergoing them. They had seen such striking proofs of benevolence, and of every virtue, in his character, that they knew not how to suspect him of being a deceiver; although they felt that they were themselves deceived. To his character they retained an attachment, although it was not sufficiently strong to induce them to support his cause, under circumstances so alarming, and so unexpected: and as to his promise of returning again to life, either it did not occur to them, or they remembered it only as a dream, the recollection of which might please their fancy, though they would not delude themselves, by assuming that it would be realized. In this state of their minds, how strikingly natural is the incident recorded by St. Luke*, concerning

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* Cap. xxiv. 13—35.

the two disciples, who walked into the country, after some rumour of the resurrection had reached their ears ! How suited to men, in their circumstances of doubt prevailing over hope, is the impressive exclamation, “ We trusted that it had been he, which should have delivered Israel ! ” Consistently with these ideas, how agreeable to probability are the hesitation and distrust of all, respecting the actual resurrection of Christ, and the obstinate disbelief of Thomas, till he had satisfied himself by the evidence of his senses.

THE account, however, which is given by the sacred historians of the manner, in which this stupendous event was accomplished, deserves our particular notice.

SOME women, we are told, who had constantly attended Jesus during his ministry ; who had listened to his precepts, and were acquainted with his predictions ; went to the sepulchre in the morning, on which the resurrection is said to have taken place ; not indeed to see whether he was risen, as had been predicted—such a thought appears not to have occurred to them—but to embalm his body, and pay him the respect and honours, usually performed to the dead.

dead. " Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; but is risen: remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and,

and, stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass*." " Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven demons. And she went, and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue, neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them, which had seen him after he was risen†." " But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them, when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and

* Luke xxiv. 1—12.

† Mark xvi. 9—14.

and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed*."

If a candid man will carefully peruse the whole of these accounts, he will, I think, find them stamped with the strongest marks of truth. He will discover the behaviour of these followers of Jesus, to be suited to the extraordinary circumstances, in which they were placed. Admitting the truth of the story, he will find it a plain, artless, and consistent narrative.—If he suspect or deny the fact, which so clearly illustrates, and exactly tallies with, their conduct, surely it is in the highest degree inconceivable,

* John xx. 24—29.

inconceivable, that the Evangelists could have any reason for wishing to invent such an account, or, humble as their talents, and their knowledge confessedly were, that they should have the ability to invent it.

LET us now consider the manner, in which these deserters of their Master; who forsook him in the most trying moment, and solemnly denied their knowledge of him, at a crisis, when, if at any time, their support must have seemed to themselves useful and acceptable; let us, I say, consider the manner, in which they conducted themselves, after he was put to death; after the ambitious hopes they had formed, were entirely extinguished; after the notions and expectations they had entertained of the character and power of the Messiah, in common with their countrymen, were completely and cruelly outraged.

IN a short space of time, we find these very men leading a life, and adopting a conduct, suitable only to those, who were entirely satisfied that Jesus was the true Messiah. They assert upon their own knowledge, that he had risen from the dead, and they expose themselves to contumely, danger and death, in proclaiming publickly that

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fact, as well as in bearing witness to the miraculous actions of their Master, during his life*. And it is observable, that the very person, who had denied and abandoned his master in a more solemn and publick manner than the rest †, was, after this interval of time, more bold and active in impressing upon the minds of others, his great qualities, and high character; as if anxious to make amends, by subsequent zeal, for former incredulity.

Now surely it is extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, to devise any reason for this change of sentiment, and of conduct, except we admit, that the disciples really believed the truth of what they taught. And as they asserted these extraordinary facts, not upon the authority of others, but upon the repeated evidence of their own senses, in matters, where their senses could

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* Vid. Acts ii. 22. iii. 13. iv. 10, 33. vii. 52. x. 38. xiii. 30. xvii. 3, 31. xviii. 5, 28. xx. 21. xxvi. 23.

† How delicately, yet how pointedly, does his master allude to St. Peter's warm professions of superior attachment, and to his more conspicuous apostacy. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more* than than these?" Compare John xxi. 15. with Mark xiv. 29. and Luke xxii. 33. Surely characters supported with such uniform consistency, and occurrences so minutely detailed, demand our unqualified assent. Such incidental traits as these, speak more strongly to the accuracy of a narrative, than the most laboured descriptions, or the most artificial arrangement.

not be deceived, I am unable to comprehend, how it can be practicable to evade the conclusion, that what they affirmed was true.

THE disciples, it is evident, must know, whether Jesus really rose from the dead, or not. They had no temptation to assert the fact, if it had been untrue: and they had shewn by their conduct before his death, and immediately after it, that if they had been mistaken or deceived in his character, they had not the courage, or the inclination, to defend and support it. Doubtless, from their behaviour at that period, it may be fairly inferred, that they were not insensible to the impulse of worldly, and ambitious motives; but still we should by no means be justified in concluding from those facts, that they would have countenanced an *imposture*, in order to promote such ends. Yet, upon any other supposition than that of their conviction that Jesus had actually and indeed risen from the grave, we must believe that these men voluntarily exposed themselves to disgrace, pain, and even death*, for the sake of supporting a lie: although they had given the clearest proof, that the fear

* Vid. Acts v. 41. xv. 26.

fear of these worldly evils had prevented them from bearing testimony to the *truth*, and defending the character of a man, whom they really revered.

INCONSISTENCY like this, without any assignable motive, nay, when every visible motive lay the contrary way, cannot be admitted to be probable; and when, by the easy concession of believing these recorded truths, all these difficulties are immediately solved, is it not the duty of every serious inquirer, to relax from the pride and obstinacy of scepticism, and, in a strain of humble and grateful acknowledgement, to admit the interference of God?

STILL however the marks of truth, which may so plainly be traced by a minute examination of the apostles' conduct, have not been wholly enumerated. Upon points which the evidence of their senses had not reached, and when they thought it not inconsistent with their fixed belief that Jesus was the true Messiah, we find, long after the resurrection, strong indications of the prejudices, which they had formerly entertained. It was still some time before they could fully comprehend, that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the privileges of the Gospel,

Gospel, without previous submission to the rites of the Mosaic law; that the ordinances of that law were become superfluous; and that the partition wall* between the Jews and other nations was *entirely* to be broken down.

A REMARKABLE instance of adherence to the mistaken opinions, which time and habit had so strongly riveted, occurs in the conduct of that disciple, to whom we have had such frequent occasion to allude.

ST. PETER, we are told, was instructed in a vision, that the distinct and peculiar institutions of the Mosaic law were henceforth to be dispensed with; yet the doctrine was so strange, so contrary to his former prejudices, that he was at first “disobedient to the Heavenly vision.” And even when he had proceeded to the house of a devout Gentile, in consequence of the rebuke, and the express direction, which he then received; and when the purport of the vision was confirmed by an indication of the divine favour towards these very Gentiles; still we find that former prepossessions were not wholly eradicated from the minds of those Jews, who were present. “For they of the circum-

* Ephes. ii. 14.

circumcision which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and glorify God." Then, and not till then, did the doubts and the scruples of the Apostle himself, as to the propriety of baptizing those new converts, entirely vanish ; yet at the same time he finds it necessary to give a reason, and almost to offer an apology, for his conduct : " Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we ? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord *."

If any one shall choose to look upon this vision as the effect of enthusiasm, or the suggestion of fraud, I entreat him to consider, that an heated imagination is not apt to oppose men's prejudices, and to confound their deeply-rooted opinions ; it is not apt to supply combinations, which the mind had not made before, or to dissolve those, which had been made ; it is not apt to suggest modes of thinking, as grounds for acting, which if they ever had presented

* Vid. Acts x.

fended themselves to the understanding, were associated with ideas, the most opposite to a sense of duty, and destructive of the pleasurable feeling, which accompanies habitual and conscious approbation. Any motive for fraud is equally difficult to be traced. The scheme, in whatever light it must be viewed, was hitherto exclusively confined to Jews; and why any of them should act in a manner, so contrary to their own prepossessions, and so repugnant to the wishes of their associates, cannot easily be determined. Even if we allow, that Cornelius was in such a station of life, as to render it desirable, or advantageous to the Apostle, that he should comply with the Centurion's wish, and admit him into the new religion; still it is highly improbable that any heathen, placed in the situation of Cornelius, should entertain such a wish, unless he had some previous grounds to be assured of it's Divine origin. His employment was to check the turbulence, and restrain the spirit, of the nation in which he resided. The contempt, which a Roman soldier might naturally be supposed to entertain for the inhabitants of a conquered country, was heightened by the antipathy, which always subsisted between

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the Jews and Heathens ; and by the animosity, which the perpetual insurrections of the Jews created between them and the Roman soldiery. Consequently, the desire of any Roman of rank in this army, to become an associate of the lowest and most despised part of this despised nation, must be excited by some very powerful cause indeed. Now, as no motive of interest or honour can be assigned ; and as it was contrary both to the prejudices of the idolater, and to those of the Jew ; all suspicion of collusion, in this case, must surely be done away. Still however, if it can be supposed, that the plan *was* concerted between the Apostle, and the convert, we might have expected to see Gentiles, freely admitted to a share of the distinction or authority, whichsoever it was, that the Apostles exercised, and which, according to this supposition, prompted the desire of the centurion to become one of their number. At least it might be expected, that Cornelius himself was to receive some real or imaginary advantage, in return for the pains and trouble he must have bestowed, in order to bring over the Apostle to his wishes. Instead of which, we never hear his name mentioned again : nor do we find that any heathens

heathens whatsoever, were advanced to any station in the rising Church. The Gospel continued, in the Apostolic age, to be wholly preached by Jews: and the general effect of admitting Cornelius, and other Gentiles, to the rite of Baptism, was to disgust and offend many of the old Proselytes to the Christian faith.

LET us, however, pursue the train of facts, which are drawn from the concurring, and clear, accounts, of the sacred historians.

NOTWITHSTANDING that the plain intimation, conveyed in this vision, was sanctioned both by previous, and subsequent declarations of the Divine will; yet the national habits of thinking continued to operate, with equal force, upon the Jewish converts. Indeed, with such difficulty were they extirpated from the minds, even of the Apostles, that it was not until after the most earnest remonstrances from Paul and Barnabas, and much disputing among themselves, that the first teachers of Christianity could be prevailed upon publicly to pronounce, that the law of Moses was not necessary to be observed by the Gentile converts. And it was not till some considerable space of time had elapsed, that its ritual obligations were no longer considered

as binding upon the Jews, or upon those who were born of Jewish parents.

SUCH is related to have been the conduct of the persons, who joined themselves to Jesus during his life, and after his death sealed their testimony in his favour, by the sacrifice of every worldly good; connexions, interest, reputation, health, and even life itself. And I think it may be said, that the narrative contains an accurate and striking representation of men, tainted with the strongest possible prepossessions; and acting, not only for a considerable time, but amidst most peculiar circumstances, under a mistake, in consequence of those prepossessions. Their conduct at any instance of disappointment, the manner in which they acted, when they discovered by infallible proof the foundation of their mistaken opinions; and the slow degrees by which they gave way to complete conviction; display the natural progress of minds, yielding reluctantly to irresistible evidence;—while the perils which awaited them, when they thus yielded, prove that nothing, but the force of truth, could extort from them a testimony; which they could not utter, but at the hazard of incurring every worldly inconvenience.

IF we admit this history of their conduct to be faithfully recorded, we are constrained to admit the truth of the Gospel: since, such conduct cannot be fully accounted for, without the supposition that their Master taught, acted, and suffered, precisely as he is described to teach, act, and suffer. Is it then to be supposed, that the account thus given was invented? It would surely exceed the usual limits of human ingenuity to assign a reason, why it should be invented; and it appears beyond the reach of human art to fabricate such an account, so minutely circumstantial, extending through such a period of years, and including such a variety of characters; at once so completely consistent, yet wearing the appearance of inconsistency; presenting, in short, a maze of human actions, readily unravelled with the proper clue, destitute of which the mind must wander in endless and inextricable difficulty.

FOR surely, if the Gospel had been a work of imposture, it cannot admit a doubt, but that the prejudices of the contrivers would have been fostered, and indulged; that the national hopes would have been flattered; and that Jesus, and his followers, would have

endeavoured to raise themselves to worldly distinction, building upon them as a foundation.—In that case, the mistakes and the incredulity of the disciples, which originated wholly in their prejudices, would either have been studiously suppressed; or ostentatiously displayed, and artificially, expressly, and repeatedly, contrasted with their subsequent opinions and conduct. If there had been any room for disbelief concerning the divine commission, and miraculous agency, of Jesus; was it the part of his associates, perpetually to remind their readers of their own incredulity, and their own suspicions? was it their part to excite distrust, even when professing to be endowed with the same powers while he was alive, and to continue the exercise of them after he was dead? Besides, from what imaginable cause, except that they were conscious of recording truth, is it likely that men should thus freely permit their own numerous failings, and glaring inconsistency, to be solemnly and circumstantially recorded? Surely it cannot, with any shadow of reason, be suspected that these men, even if they had the ability, would have had the inclination, to fabricate such accounts as these. And as, from their long continuance with

Jesus,

Jesus, both during his life, and after his resurrection, they must have been completely able to judge concerning the reality of the cures he performed, and the other miraculous works they have attested, I see not how we can avoid assenting to their testimony, and implicitly receiving evidence, so ample and appropriate.

IT may be necessary here to add, that the account in the historical books of the New Testament, concerning the conduct of those Jews who embraced, as well as those who rejected, Christianity, is strictly conformable to the nature and strength of the national prejudices, and accurately corresponds with the rest of the facts recorded. The first Profelytes to Christianity, yielded assent to the testimony in favour of Jesus, from the Prophetical* books, and hearkened, without reluctance, to the declarations of the eye-witnesses of his resurrection. But they held, with a firm, and stedfast grasp, the peculiar tenets of the Jewish law; and viewed, with a jealous eye, every attempt to lessen the authority of the Mosaic ritual, or to extend the advantages of the New Dispensation

* Acts xviii. 28.

pensation to the Gentiles, unless they previously consented to be circumcised. They arraigned the conduct, and disputed the authority, of the Apostles, when they sanctioned such novel and offensive doctrines: and they eagerly listened to the instructions of false teachers, who inculcated lessons, more suitable to their opinions, and more acceptable to their wishes. By them Peter was accused, after baptizing Cornelius, because that he had gone in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them*. To comply with their superstitious, and intolerant attachment to their own religion, the same Apostle thought himself authorized, and even obliged, to adopt the dissembling conduct, for which he was censured by St. Paul†. They insisted so vehemently upon the necessity of circumcising Heathen proselytes, as to occasion the solemn consultation, recorded in the 15th chapter of Acts. On their account St. Paul was compelled to circumcise Timothy, contrary to the dictates of his inclination, and his judgment: and to avoid giving unnecessary offence to the rigid disciples of Moses,

* Acts xi. 2.

† Galat. ii. 12.

Moses, as well as Christ, he was persuaded to give a public proof of his adherence to the ceremonial law *.

IN the Epistles, and particularly that to the Galatians, we observe evident marks of the flowness and reluctance, with which the Jewish converts divested themselves of their attachment to the ritual of their ancestors, and of the readiness with which they hearkened to those instructors, whose language revived their prejudices in it's favour, and their belief of it's unalterable obligation †.

WITH respect to the unbelieving Jews, we are informed, that their opposition to the Christian cause, arose principally upon such points, as they conceived to be injurious to the Mosaic law ; and that it was particularly pointed against those Apostles, who were most zealous in teaching that it's efficacy and obligations had ceased. Their charge against Stephen was conceived in these terms, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place,

* Acts xvi. 3. and xxi. 21, &c.

† These Jewish Christians had recourse to written documents also in support of their favourite tenets. See Jones's account of the Gospel of the Nazarenes, part ii. c. 29. sect. 6. Upon similar principles the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs appears to have been composed. See Modern Universal History, Vol. X. p. 435. note.

place, and the law. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us*." For the same reasons their animosity was most implacable against St. Paul, whom they justly regarded as the peculiar Apostle of the Gentiles†, and whom therefore they considered as the most zealous opponent of the perfection, and immutability, of their antient institutions.

THEIR unceasing opposition to his doctrine, their virulent animosity against his person, afford a convincing proof of the strength of their national prejudices; and, at the same time, of the consistency and accuracy of the accounts which are transmitted to us, concerning the means, by which those prejudices, in a part of the nation, were gradually softened and finally subdued.

WHETHER

* Acts vi. 13, 14. Thus in Antioch, the Jews listened attentively to the preaching of Paul, so long as they conceived it exclusively addressed to themselves; but when they found that the new Dispensation was to include the Gentiles, "They were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Acts xiii. 43, 45. So also at Jerusalem, they patiently "gave him audience," till he made a declaration in favour of the Gentiles; then they exclaimed, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."

Acts xxii. 21, 22.

† Acts ix. 15.

WHETHER therefore we observe the plain marks of national and religious prepossessions, in the minds of the disciples, during our Saviour's life, when they were perpetually mistaking the real character of the Messiah; or whether we observe them in their obstinate refusal afterwards to depart from the law of Moses, and hold any intercourse with the Heathens, till commanded by express revelation; whether we contemplate the jealousy, with which all the Apostles' conduct was watched by their converts, and the perpetual rancour with which St. Paul was opposed; or whether we trace to this cause the malignant eagerness, with which the Jews have always persecuted the proselytes to Christianity*; in whatever mode we observe it operating, we discern, in an uniform and consistent story, the plainest marks of a rooted and inflexible principle, extended over an whole nation, and influencing the conduct of every

* "The rage of the Jews against the Christians was conveyed from father to son, from age to age; so that the church of Christ had, in no period of time, more bitter and desperate enemies, than that very people, to whom the immortal Saviour was more especially sent." Mosheim's Ecclesiast. Hist. book 1. c. 5.

every individual; a principle, which we have the strongest reason to believe, that nothing but the most incontestable marks of truth, nothing short of a divine interposition, would be sufficient to eradicate from the minds of any considerable part of the Jewish people.



CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE DISCIPLES, DURING THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Introduction and division of the subject.—1st, Proofs from Scripture, that this power was conferred—and 2dly, actually exercised.—3dly, The purpose for which it was bestowed.—Lastly, the effect it produced on the minds of the Apostles.—One instance against the exercise of this power examined.—Reasons assigned for it.—Further reflections upon the subject.—Uniformity of the Divine dispensations.—Result of this inquiry favourable to the truth of our Holy Religion.—Vindication of the Apostles' character.

IT may at first sight be improbable, that the disciples, after having themselves exercised the power of working miracles, should suffer their minds to give way to any doubt, respecting the character and pretensions of Jesus. When however the fact comes to be narrowly examined, it is to be accounted for upon the same principles, by

which the rest of their conduct appears to have been guided ; and instead of affording any just pretence for incredulity, it will corroborate the arguments, already advanced, in behalf of the Christian religion.

PROPHETÆ Veteris Testamenti (says a learned commentator,) patrabant quidem miracula, at hanc potestatem aliis dare non poterant : quod Christus fecit Propheta-rum dominus, et nunc cùm in terris ageret, et postquam in cœlum abiisset*. This distinction will be readily admitted by the careful reader of Holy Writ, with the exception perhaps of a single instance†: but in order to proceed to the conclusions with the greater safety ; I shall first produce the Scriptural evidence for this interesting and important fact, and then inquire into the consequences, which it seems necessarily to involve. In the first place therefore, I propose to shew, that this miraculous power was really conferred : and secondly, that it was as certainly exercised. Thirdly, I shall consider the purposes, for which it was bestowed ; and lastly, the effect it seemed to produce upon the minds of those, to whom it was imparted.

1st, THE

* Wetsten. ad Matt. x. 1.

† See 2 Kings ii. 9.



1st, THE testimony of Scripture is decisive as to the fact of conferring the power; since it is expressly recorded, that it was bestowed not only upon the twelve Apostles, but upon seventy others also. Thus we read in the 10th chapter of St. Matthew, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." "These twelve," it is repeated, "Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead*, cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give †." The same fact is recorded, though more concisely, by St. Mark. "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth

* This clause is omitted in the text of Griesbach. The evidence of various MSS. concurs with other probabilities to establish the propriety of its rejection.

† Vv. 1, 5—8.

forth to preach. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons." And again, "he calleth unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two: and gave them power over unclean spirits*." To the same effect St. Luke : "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." He mentions also the second instance of the same power being conferred, though with some little variation. "After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two, before his face, into every city, and place, whither he himself would come.— And heal the sick that are therein: and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you †".

2dly, THE evidence is no less full, as to the exercise of this power. Thus, after recording the commission, with which the Apostles were entrusted, one of the Evangelists before quoted, particularly mentions the

* Mark iii. 14, 15. and vi. 7.

† Luke ix. 1, 2. x. 1, 9.

the manner, in which they used the powers vested in them. "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*." It is recorded with equal precision, that they gave an account to their Master of the manner, in which they had acquitted themselves, in the discharge of their important commission. "And the Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what *they had done*, and what they had taught †." St. Luke, to the same effect, says, "They departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing every where.—And the Apostles, when they were returned, told him all, that they had *done* ‡." The same thing is implied in vv. 49, 50, of the same chapter; and as the evidence is indirect, it is the more unquestionable. St. John there informs his Master, that, when they were absent in executing their commission,

* Mark vi. 12, 13.

† Ibid. ver. 30. I conceive this last verse, taken with the context, clearly to refer to the miracles, wrought during their mission. The word *ἐπίσημα* confirms this, as it is the term peculiarly applied to the performance of miraculous acts.

‡ Luke ix. 6, 10.

fion, they had seen a stranger pretending * to exercise a miraculous power: that they were

* See also Mark ix. 38, 39. It is by no means necessary for us to understand, from the account here given, that any one, not authorized by Christ, was actually possessed of this power. "Casting out," is equivalent to, "attempting to cast out;" a form of speech far from unusual in the Greek language, and not unfrequent in our own. In Upton's Critical Observations upon Shakspeare, there is the following rule. "In his use of Verbs, there is sometimes to be understood intention, willingness, and desire. The Greek language," he properly adds, "has many instances fully to our purpose. Euripides in Ion: v. 1346. (Edit. Musgr.)

"*Ηκεστας ὡς μ' ἔκτεινεν.*

Audivisti quomodo me interfecit, i. e. interficere voluit." p. 342. Edit. 2d. He refers also to Andromach. v. 811. To which may be added from Sophocles in Ajace. v. 1126. ΟΕδ. Tyr. v. 1454. (Edit. Brunck.) Herodotus, in lib. I. sect. 109. has *ἥσ τον τὸν υἱὸν κτείνει δι' ἐμεῦ*. interficere vult. See also Virg. AEn. III. 256. Mr. Upton quotes Paradise Lost, B. IV. 175.—"that passed that way--i. e. that should now, or hereafter, endeavour to pass that way."

What I wish to guard my readers against is, the supposition that Scripture authorizes the conclusion, that any one, not commissioned from Heaven, could instantaneously effect the cure here represented. I am far from denying, that the disciples, in the very limited state of their knowledge, at that time, might believe, that the person here alluded to, could effect the ejection of a demon, by virtue of the name of Christ. Certain it is, that after the ascension, some unbelieving Jews did attribute similar efficacy to the name of our Saviour. See Acts xix. 13. Indeed exorcism was a trade very much in vogue at that time, as we may learn from Josephus, who relates some curious experiments of that kind, made in the presence of Vespasian. Antiquit. B. VIII. c. 2. sect. 5. I shall beg leave to quote his words, and recommend them to the candid attention of all those, who can see nothing but trick in the miracles of our blessed Saviour. "I have seen" (says the credulous Historian) "a certain

were offended at his presumption, and had forbidden him. It is evident, from the manner in which the representation is made, that the presumption of the stranger, consisted in his assuming powers equal to those which the Apostles themselves possessed. They forbade him to exercise the power, with which they were entrusted, because it had not been delegated to him, as he was not even a follower of Jesus. Moreover, it is expressly affirmed of the seventy, who had been sent upon a similar mission, and entrusted with similar authority, that "they returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject

certain man of mine own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal, in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: he put a ring, that had a root of one of those sorts, mentioned by Solomon, to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade, and demonstrate to the spectators, that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup, or basin, full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man."

To such pretenders as these our Lord alludes, Luke xi. 19. "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?" No rebuke could be more pointedly just, no argument more rationally conclusive.

ject unto us, through thy name.—And he said unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from Heaven *." It is then plainly recorded by the sacred historians, that the disciples, during their Master's life-time, upon various occasions, were invested with the power of performing miracles. There is indeed one exception to this, and one only; the examination of which I am by no means desirous to elude, but shall defer, till the 4th topic comes under discussion.

3dly, When Jesus sent them forth, his charge, as to the instructions they were to deliver, was briefly this; "As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand †." When the seventy were appointed to this peculiar service it is to be remarked, that they were sent by Jesus, "two and two before his face, into every city, and place, whither he himself would come ‡." And in conformity with the instructions which they received, "they went out, and preached, that men should repent §." The object of their commission therefore plainly was, to facilitate the execution of that design, for which Jesus himself was sent; to diffuse a more

* Luke x. 17, 18.

† Luke x. 1.

‡ Matt. x. 7.

§ Mark vi. 12.

a more general knowledge of his dignity; to excite the attention of the Jews to his pretensions; and to prepare them for becoming members of the expected kingdom, by a change of heart, and a reformation of life. They were invested with the power of working miracles, that thereby they might be enabled the more effectually to accomplish these great ends; that they might clearly evince, that they acted under the authority of God; and might not be confounded with the zealots, and impostors, who abounded in those days. Without this power, plain and illiterate as they were, and simple as were the injunctions, which they were commanded to deliver, it is more than probable, they would have met with no attention: they would therefore have failed to prepare the minds of the Jews, for the reception of the personage, who was to follow them.

In explaining the object and extent of the disciples' commission, it is obvious to remark the limited nature of their preaching, during their Master's life-time. It was, simply and expressly, to inculcate the necessity of repentance, because the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. What this king-

dom was, they had not yet learned ; their thoughts indeed were often directed to the subject, but their ideas concerning it's nature were grossly inaccurate. It is extremely erroneous to suppose, as Hammond has done, that the Apostles were fully aware of the real import of the phrase ; and that, with a complete knowledge of the purpose and consequences of Christ's coming, they were instructed to warn the Jews of the calamities, which awaited them in the destruction of Jerusalem, in case they persisted in unbelief*. Their whole conduct, both before and after the conferring of these extraordinary powers, shews that they acted in obedience to the commands of their Master in delivering to others, what he had enjoined ; but that they were utterly unacquainted with the precise meaning of the message. It sufficiently answered the purpose, for which they were sent, that they should exhort their countrymen to amend their lives ; that they should instruct them to expect the approach of the Prophet, from whom their own powers were derived, and from whom
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* Vid. ad Matt. iii. 2. Their preaching indeed had the effect of a warning, as will be shewn hereafter ; but the learned commentator is clearly wrong, in supposing the preachers to have been thoroughly instructed upon this subject, and fully aware of the tendency of what they taught.

their hearers would receive fuller information, as to the object of his mission, and the nature of his doctrines. In conformity with these sentiments, is the opinion of the learned Rosenmüller. *Nihil nunc quidem ultrà mandatum Apostolis, quām ut Judæos ad vitam meliorem hortarentur, et ad Messiam audiendum pertraherent, à quo accepturi essent cætera, quæ ad salutem ipsis essent necessaria.* Jesum esse hunc Messiam, nondum tunc temporis palam professi sunt discipuli. To the same effect the pious and judicious Le Clerc expresses himself. Observandum est hoc loco Apostolos, qui mittebantur ut nunciarent propinquum esse *regnum cœlorum*, vix ipsos satis scivisse quid esset; cum ad ascensum ipsum Christi, eum in terris regnaturum fuisse crediderint. Vid. Act. i. 6. Nihil ergo reponere potuissent quærentibus quid iis verbis intelligerent, nisi se à magistro suo, Jesu Nazareno, ita jussos loqui; cui rei addere poterant fidem narrationem, ex quâ quid consequetur, elicere auditores poterant*.

4thly, ALTHOUGH they did not clearly understand the import, or comprehend the full extent, of what they were to teach, yet as

* Vid. Rosenmüller, and Cleric. ad Matth. x. 7.

as there was nothing in the manner of delivering this commission to them, which alarmed their prejudices, they entered upon their task with eagerness, and even pride. Acting under their former habitual impressions, they conceived themselves exercising some share of that power, with which they were afterwards to be invested, as the chosen friends of the great Prophet, by whom they had been selected as the instruments of his high commission: and hence arose both the joy, with which they returned to give an account of the power they had displayed; and the haughtiness, with which they had interfered to prevent a person, not commissioned by Jesus, from exercising a similar power. I must not, however, omit the single exception to this ability to work miracles, which is recorded by three of the Evangelists, with little or no variation. The following is the account given by St. Matthew. "When they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer, and fasting*.”

CONCERNING this incident, it seems necessary to observe, that, if Jesus really came with authority from Heaven, to teach a new law, to announce blessings, and to award punishment, Faith, or a confidence in his power, and a reliance upon his promises, was a qualification, which might, with the strictest propriety, be required in those, who were to receive themselves, or to administer

* Matt. xvii. 14—21. Mark ix. 14—29. Luke ix
38—42.

administer to others, any preternatural alleviation of their bodily sufferings.

FOR in the first place, it served to display that intimate knowledge of the human heart, which can proceed only from him, to whom all secrets are known. This knowledge, it appears, our Lord possessed, and exhibited in the most extraordinary manner; but upon no occasions more, than in selecting objects for the exercise of his preternatural authority. Hence he could neither be entrapped by the snares of artifice, nor misled by the professions of hypocrisy, when any one solicited the performance of a cure; and hence he could try, with the utmost nicety, the permanence and constancy of his disciples' belief; since the power, which attended the call of faith, deserted them, when any doubt or incredulity hovered near their hearts. That this intimate knowledge of the most secret thoughts of men was judged peculiarly necessary, and indeed indispensable, in a teacher divinely inspired, we may learn from a circumstance, which actually occurred in the course of our Lord's Ministry.—‘ When a woman, who had been a sinner, anointed Jesus while he was sitting

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at meat with Simon the Pharisee, ‘he who had bidden him, *spake** *within himself*, saying, “ This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman, this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner:” and thus proved it to be a natural notion, that a divine instructor should be endued with that knowledge, which Jesus actually possessed. Jesus replied to his thoughts, shewed by a parable, that the woman’s expression of her gratitude was reasonable, and, on account of her former and present marks of repentance, spake comfort to her, by thrice declaring, that her sins were remitted †.’

BUT secondly, as our Lord was hereby enabled to discern, so, by questioning thus minutely the moral qualifications of the candidates for his favour, he evinced his determination to reward a virtuous disposition. That the faith, thus insisted upon, was intitled to remuneration, as being the evidence of such a disposition, will, I trust, fully appear from the following considerations.

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* Luke vii. 39, &c.

† Newcome on our Lord’s conduct, p. 119. The whole chapter deserves to be most carefully perused.

IF it be allowed, that it is possible, for the Deity to reveal his will to his creatures, it will readily be granted, that such an interposition will be vouchsafed, to enlighten their ignorance, to reform their morals, and to propose such sanctions to virtue, and discouragements from vice, as may powerfully influence their conduct. It is also likely, that he will deal with his creatures in this, as in other instances; that he will treat them as free agents, and not control their reason, or their will, to accept, or reject, the proffer, by such overpowering evidence, as to render hesitation, or disbelief impossible. He is likely to deliver such precepts, accompanied by such attestations, as are sufficient for the conviction of rational and good minds.—Now the evils, for the cure of which the possibility of God's interference is admitted, must necessarily have prevailed to a considerable degree, before the necessity of any departure from the ordinary methods of governing the world could exist. And it is undeniably, that from the very nature of the evils, proposed to be cured, there will arise various obstacles to the adoption of the remedy, so graciously prescribed. Ignorance is the fruitful

fruitful source of prejudice and error; vicious practices entail upon the human heart a long train of cherished habits, difficult to be eradicated; and if the sanctions to be proposed are derived from the invisible world, no little courage and resolution will be required, to enable a man to resign present visible enjoyments, in the expectation of future rewards. The prejudices thus imbibed, the propensities thus indulged, will present a formidable barrier to the reception of truth, even into well-disposed minds; and the hold, which present and carnal objects take upon the senses, indisposes them to receive a spiritual doctrine, let the evidence, with which it is accompanied, be ever so strong. Hence in such cases it will not follow, that even the attestation of miracles will compel assent from every spectator; —the obstinate prepossessions of the mind, and the darling gratifications of the body, will oppose considerable difficulty, to the admission of doctrines the most useful, and rational, even when enforced by the most powerful evidence. Some good seeds of virtuous inclination must be sown in the heart, before it will consent to receive a law, which would correct opinions, and

subdue habits, so long fostered; the docility, with which such instructions are suffered to take root, must proceed from a moral quality of no ordinary merit; and the implicit belief of the declarations of a person, so commissioned, will in such cases be the effect, and must itself assume the name, of genuine virtue. If moreover the entertaining or avowing such sentiments be attended with any worldly inconvenience or hazard; if the safety, or interest, or reputation be thereby endangered; the moral effort will be so much greater, and its value enhanced in proportion. To embrace truth when it is unpopular, to adhere to it in spite of reproach and inconvenience, will on all sides be allowed to be an indubitable test, both of sincerity and resolution. Belief, in such a case, is not the mere assent of the mind to a proposition, extorted by the weight of evidence, and producing no fruits upon the conduct; it is the change, heart and soul, of the whole thinking and acting man; it is the relinquishment of obstinate prejudices; the abandonment of corrupt and depraved notions; the resignation of the whole self to truth and virtue.

IF, from abstract reasoning on the pre-existent,

existent, and concomitant, circumstances, which would be likely to attend a revelation of the will of God to his creatures, we proceed to that, which is asserted to have been made in the case of the Christian religion, we shall find, that such was actually the state of things, as to draw upon those, who yielded assent to the declarations of Jesus Christ, the praise of ingenuousness and singleness of heart; of a disposition to embrace truth, however opposite to their rooted prepossessions, however repugnant to their customs and habits, and however irreconcileable with their present interest and comfort. Whether we look to the Jewish or the Gentile world, impediments of the most formidable nature, opposed themselves to those articles of faith, and those maxims of conduct, which were necessary to be received by the followers of Jesus.—Religious principle and national views, superadded to the sordid notions and corrupt practices of vice and superstition, equally inclined the disciple of Moses, and the pupil of idolatry, to turn a deaf ear to the glad tidings of salvation. With the former, inflexible attachment to the Law, connected with the grossest views, and most erroneous traditions,

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and an absorption of moral principle in ceremonial observances, and selfish ideas of national aggrandizement, concurred to render faith in Jesus, the result of a most powerful combination of resolution, disinterestedness, and docility; so much so indeed, that we see those, who were distinguished, in this particular, from the rest of their countrymen, acting for some time under a perpetual conflict, between reason and prejudice; between worldly expectations, and spiritual views; between the testimony of their senses, and the suggestions of their opinions. Nor was the task less difficult, nor the merit less conspicuous, in those among the Heathen, who embraced the doctrine of the Jewish Messiah. They were called upon to forego the prejudices which education had nourished, and the vices which idolatry had sanctioned; they were to expose themselves to the scorn and derision of their friends and countrymen, and to receive instruction on the most important of all subjects, religion and morals, from the disciples of Moses. Nothing therefore, but a strong principle of virtue, resigning habits and prepossessions, at the call of reason and of truth, could prevail upon

upon a Gentile to embrace a religion, proscribed and persecuted as it was, from the hands of such a despised and detested people. And accordingly we find, that, at first, few Heathens in the higher classes of life, had the courage to relinquish their pride and their vices, their temporal expectations and their worldly lusts, to become the followers of Jesus, and the associates of Jews. Besides, "Christ crucified," as it was "unto the Jews a stumbling-block," so was it "unto the Gentiles foolishness*." As it offended the pride of the one, it incurred the derision of the other. To deify a malefactor, seemed, to the generality of them, a species of folly so glaringly absurd, that they would neither take the pains to investigate the cause, nor expose themselves to the hazard of participating in the consequences.

HENCE we see, that the facts recorded, concerning the origin and progress of the Christian dispensation, warrant us in asserting an high degree of moral excellence for those, who submitted their erroneous opinions to the doctrines of Jesus, and bade defiance to pain and contumely, in order

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* 1 Cor. i. 23.

to embrace a life of mortification and self-denial, of repentance and amendment. For without a corresponding change of conduct, a mere declaration of faith would have been nugatory and unavailing; nor indeed is there any other species of faith, to which, in the writings of the New Testament, any merit is assigned, or any reward promised. And surely it will be allowed, that the profession of faith must have been real, when no possible advantage could arise from the mere profession, but on the contrary, every worldly inconvenience. The only persons, of whom it can be pretended, that their faith was unaccompanied with a corresponding change of habits, or that their profession of it was occasioned by the desire of obtaining some present advantage, were those, who solicited some miraculous cure: and of these it may be remarked, that the sincerity of their faith was demonstrated by the earnestness of their petitions to obtain relief, when that relief could only be afforded by a miracle. Jesus therefore, in appropriating a share of his supernatural gifts to those more particularly, who possessed this previous qualification, acted in strict conformity with his character.

raëter as a moral teacher, since the power, with which he entrusted some, and by which he relieved others, evidently was employed in those instances, as the immediate and direct reward of a virtuous disposition.

LASTLY, it would have been injurious to the evidence, and consequently destructive of the very ends, of Christ's coming, if the preternatural power which he exercised, had been indiscriminately applied to the relief, or entrusted to the management, of any, who wanted the previous qualification of faith. The effect of gifts so applied might, and would have been ascribed to the operation of chance; or to captious and rash observers, they might have furnished some pretence for asserting, that they were intended to reward even the withholding of assent from the Divine commission of Jesus. So far from affording a testimony in his favour, they might have operated in a manner precisely the contrary. It was therefore both reasonable and necessary, that these powers should be granted or withholden, according to the previous state of mind and disposition in the persons exercising it. In the circumstance, which has furnished occasion for this investigation, the disciples

found themselves endowed with the faculty of working miracles, so long as they had full reliance upon the goodness and the power of him who bestowed it. After a continual exercise of it, they might be disposed to arrogate to themselves the merit ; they might consider it as a more immediate indulgence of Heaven to themselves ; or on the other hand, alarmed at the violence of the calamity, which occasioned such an earnest application for relief, they might fancy themselves unable to remove it, and so question the ability of Jesus to confer power to such an extent. In short, they might be in a frame of mind *, in which the continuance of the preternatural endowment might be injurious to the very cause, which it was intended to promote. In this case it is consonant with the highest wisdom, that those powers should be suspended or withdrawn ; and then the suspension or discontinuance of those powers, is so far from serving as an argument, to prove that they never were conferred or exercised, that on the contrary, it has a tendency to establish the fact, and

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* It appears, indeed, from what our Lord subjoins, that they had neglected the appointed means of attaining such a frame of mind, as would enable them to possess the necessary qualification of faith. Vid. inf. p. 189.

to prove the consistency and wisdom of the scheme, in subservience to which these extraordinary qualifications were bestowed.

LET us for a moment suppose the power of working miracles conferred upon a person, who did not believe in Christ. If he did not exercise that power for the purpose of promoting the belief of Christianity, it would have been conferred in vain. If he had exercised it for the purpose of preventing that belief, it would have been conferred with a very bad effect, and would have subjected Christ's religion to the prejudices and antipathies of an adversary. But if we can suppose that adversary to disregard his prejudices, and to exercise miraculous powers for the purpose of making converts, would not the want of consistency, and the want of sincerity, have been objected to the teacher; and would not such an objection have obstructed the efficacy of the doctrine which he taught?—Ininsurmountable therefore are the difficulties which present themselves, and equally irreconcileable are they both to the ordinary and extraordinary providence of God, if we admit the office of propagating Christianity by miracles, to have been consigned to any agent, who did

not previously, and in the moment of exercising that office, believe in Christ. From the general imbecillity of human nature, the general conviction of a believer might be, for a season, overpowered by doubt or fear; but return it would, when doubt or fear had ceased to operate; and their operation would certainly be counteracted by every occasion, upon which the power of working miracles was exerted.

BUT further, we may observe that, from the circumstances of the fact, which appears to furnish ground for the objection that the apostles really had not the power of working miracles, a conclusion may be fairly drawn in direct contradiction to the objection. For from what cause should they ask, why they could not perform *this* miracle, if they had not been authorised to perform, and if they had not actually performed, *miracles* at other times?

THERE remains only one other point to be cleared up, respecting this very interesting transaction. Some commentators imagine that, as the Sacred text now stands, our Lord is made to assign two different, and even contradictory, reasons to account for the demon not having been ejected by the

the disciples. So insuperable indeed does this objection appear in the eyes of one eminent critic*, that, in order to remove it, he adopts the violent expedient of expunging one of the verses in question from the text. But that the contradiction is only in appearance, and therefore that the difficulty completely vanishes when the passage is properly explained, is well shewn by a commentator already quoted. “*Suprà dixerat Christus, fiduciâ opus esse ad hæc præsertim majoris notæ miracula. Nunc ostendit, quomodo ea parari possit, precibus nimirùm fervidis. Jejunium ideò adjungit, quia ad preces in primis requiritur animus demissus, cui rei inservit jejunium †.*”

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* Vid. Matt. xvii. 20, 21. and Wakefield ad loc.

† Rosenmüller in loc—Upon this question of the connection of prayer with faith, I must beg also to quote the observations, which are made by Abp. Newcome, after he has explained Matt. xviii. 19. as referring to “petitions offered up by the Apostles for the power of working miracles, in confirmation of their decisions.” ‘See a general instance of such prayer (adds this excellent Theologian) Acts iv. 30. and a particular one Acts ix. 40. Observe also the mention of faith, as availing to the performance of miracles, Acts vi. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The prayer of faith, which was to heal the sick, James v. 14, 15. was confined to the age of miracles: for it follows, “and the Lord shall raise him up, and though he have committed sins” (occasioning the judicial infliction of the disease, 1 Cor. v. 5. xi. 30. even in this case)

IT appears therefore from the writings of the New Testament, that the disciples were invested with the power of working miracles while their Lord was yet upon earth. And as the testimony to the fact is so undesigned, it demands our more unequivocal assent. So little does any notion appear to have possessed these writers, of making a boast

case) "they shall be forgiven him:" (the immediate punishment of them shall be removed, and the guilt of them afterwards on the Gospel conditions.) In St. John's first epistle there is this remarkable passage: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.—If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it." c. v. 14, 16. The prayer for another, here mentioned, has justly been considered as a prayer offered up for one, who, in consequence of sin, had been judicially visited with sickness; and the impulse of the spirit, or human prudence, was to determine whether the sin was unto death. It should seem therefore, that the confidence, which those Christians had, that God heard their petitions, which were according to his will, referred to working such a particular kind of miracles. And hence will be explained a parallel passage in the same Epistle: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him; because we keep his commandments." c. iii. 22. It appears by v. 24. that this was spoken of such as had the spirit. When our Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened:" (Matt. vii. 7, 8.) he refers to spiritual blessings, and the good things of the gospel; not to every temporal blessing, but to what was profitable for salvation. Comp. ver. 11. and Luke xi. 13.' Newcome on our Lord's conduct, p. 189. not.

boast of this power, or of endeavouring artfully to induce a persuasion, that they were invested with it, that the only circumstance relative to it, which is mentioned with any particularity, furnishes at first, as we have seen, some room to doubt, whether any such power was possessed at all. These miraculous acts being once substantiated, a splendid accession is made to the great mass of evidence, in favour of the divine origin of Christianity. And the more accurately we examine into the circumstances, under which they were wrought, the greater will be their weight in ascertaining the preponderance of truth, or error, in this most important question.

IT is scarcely necessary to suggest, that an intelligent believer, in arguing for the truth of Christ's religion, does not insist upon the miracles of Christ himself, considered only as supernatural events, but as having a visible congruity with the peculiar and avowed pretensions of the person, who performed them. Thus too the miracles wrought by the Apostles, viewed in reference to their circumstances, and to the peculiar characters, opinion, and conduct of those who performed them, constitute a distinct,

distinct, a multiplied series of evidence, for the truth of the Christian religion.

We may remark in the first place, that the commission, for the more successful execution of which the disciples were invested with this preternatural authority, is in strict conformity with the method, which Divine Providence appears to have pursued in his dealings with mankind ; and it forms a link in the chain of those dispensations, by which the Almighty has been pleased to interpose ; especially when the sins and offences of men, render a display of the sterner attribute of justice more immediately necessary. Even then we find that a veil is not thrown over the amiable features of mercy ; since, in the spirit of that benign quality, he points out their offences, warns them of his intention, and gives them time for repentance and amendment, that they may thereby escape from the wrath to come.

THIS was manifested in the intimations, which were conveyed to the old world, through Enoch, and through Noah ; in the representations so repeatedly made to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah through the Prophets ; as well as in the timely and gracious invitation to the inhabitants of Nineveh,

veh, which happily awakened them to a sense of their guilt, and averted the impending punishment. As however, at the coming of Christ *, a last and a most signal judgement was denounced against those, who should be found impenitent and obdurate; still greater care was manifested, and still more important instruments were employed, to bring the infatuated nation to a sense of their crimes, and to make them worthy

* The period of the Messiah's reign, was both predicted, and expected, to abound in blessings to those, who should be found deserving of the favour of God by faith and obedience; and in calamities to those, whose disobedience and obduracy should render them objects of his displeasure. The Jews unhappily conceived, that the former would be exclusively showered down upon them; while the afflictions would be as exclusively the portion of the Heathens.—It is certain, that John the Baptist enforced his warning, by dwelling more particularly upon the judgements, which were to take place; it is probable on the other hand, that the disciples dwelt upon the more pleasing topic of the advantages, which would ensue from a compliance with the terms of their message; but the tendency of both was the same, to awaken their hearers to repentance, and to avert the merited displeasure of the Almighty.—Both however performed their commissions, with a limited and indistinct view of the whole purpose, for which they were sent; as has been shewn before of the disciples, and as is proved in the case of John by the message which he sent to our Saviour: concerning which, after a full consideration, I adopt the opinion of Tertullian, that it originated in John's own doubts: and in this view it strengthens the evidence for Christianity, as it takes away the possibility of collusion between the Messiah and his forerunner. See Matt. xi. 2—6. and Jortin's Discourses concerning the Truths of the Christian Religion, p. 195, &c. particularly p. 200.

worthy of being admitted into the kingdom of righteousness. A greater prophet than any, who had appeared under the Mosaic dispensation, was purposely raised up to preach repentance and remission of sins, and to prepare the way for the advent of the Messiah. The birth of John the Baptist was predicted by an angel, and his mission was adorned by almost every circumstance, which could give dignity and authority to his character, and secure attention to his exhortations. The great object of his preaching was, "to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*;" and the commission, afterwards granted to the Apostles, proceeded upon the same plan, and pointed to the same end. As the Baptist was sent to inculcate upon the Jews, the necessity of purifying their hearts, and reforming their habits, before the kingdom of the Messiah should arrive, and before the judgement to be revealed should overwhelm the unrighteous; so when Jesus came, his disciples were sent to instruct those, who were yet strangers to his person and character, concerning the indispensable necessity of possessing the same previous qualifications of

* Luke i. 17.

of purity, and contrition of heart. As the former excited the attention of his hearers, by the austerity of his life, and the earnestness of his rebukes; so these awakened the feelings, and impressed the understandings, of their countrymen still more forcibly, by a display of miraculous powers: because the time was shorter, and a more urgent necessity existed, for their exhortations to take immediate effect.

AN advocate for revelation may consistently argue, that this uniformity and correspondence of design in all the various dispensations, which are asserted to have proceeded from God, since the earliest ages of the world, is more than can rationally be imputed to a series of human fabrications; and it must be allowed, that the light, in which they represent the mercy of the Almighty, as giving his creatures every opportunity of escaping from deserved and threatened punishment, and entreating them, as it were, to accept his proffered pardon and favour, is perfectly suitable to the best notions we can form of the Deity.

SECONDLY, We may remark, in the narrative of these transactions, a congruity even with our Lord's way of teaching, in the

progressive unfolding of the character and office of the Messiah; and in the almost imperceptible gradations, by which he divulged the real nature of his kingdom. It was evidently the aim of our blessed Saviour not to offend, and alarm unnecessarily, the prejudices of his hearers;—had he so done, the number of those, who entitled themselves to the favour of God, by hearkening to the message delivered by his Son, would most probably have been considerably less;—but by strictly inculcating the moral duties, and asserting their superiority over ceremonial observances, while at the same time he displayed his supernatural powers, he gradually prepared their minds for the whole of that truth, which at first would have been alike adverse to their wishes, and contradictory to their preconceived opinions. “I have many things to say,” was his considerate address to his disciples, “but ye cannot bear them now.” He dealt with his countrymen at large, as he did with his chosen followers, by making use of those persons, as instruments for the important purpose of giving more notoriety to his mission, who were themselves unacquainted with the whole import of the Gospel scheme; and who

who consequently could not shock the ears of the Jews, or hinder the success of the Messiah, by divulging prematurely, and announcing indiscreetly, the whole design of their Lord's coming.

FROM this circumstance results, thirdly, a complete proof of the absence of imposture from the scheme: because the disciples worked miracles, according to their own apprehension, not for Christianity as it really is in itself, and as they afterwards taught it; but partly with moral views of a general nature, and partly from personal considerations of their own grandeur in the Messiah's kingdom. Had they, when they set out upon the discharge of this commission, been apprized of the consequences of what they taught; it is more than probable, that their prejudices and their fears would have combined to prevent them from embarking in a cause, which threatened ruin to the peculiar institutions of Moses, and contradicted those interpretations of the prophetic writings, which were regarded with as much fondness, and watched with as much jealousy, as even the prophecies themselves. While therefore, from their limited view of things, they were acting a main

main part in support of a design, at which their feelings and their prejudices at that time revolted, and which was in direct opposition to their supposed interest, it is impossible they could have been acting deliberately in concert with an impostor—it is equally impossible, that they should have been dupes to the artifice of a deceiver, since they must certainly know whether they had the power of working miracles, or not—lastly, if they had been dupes, it is impossible that they should afterwards encounter every inconvenience, and every hazard, for the sake of bearing testimony to the integrity of him, by whom they were conscious of having been deceived.

ON this head, however, we may remark further, that this limitation of their teaching accounts for the Jews not taking offence immediately at a doctrine, which did not appear to infringe upon the national prejudices; and for the Apostles not being seized by the bigoted rulers, as accomplices of Jesus. They had, in the course of their particular and detached ministry, said nothing which amounted to blasphemy in the judgement of their hearers; and therefore they gave no offence by their miracles, as Christ did, because his miracles were worked professedly

professedly for a distinct purpose from that, which the Apostles seemed to have immediately in view. Afterwards, when they taught, as their Master had taught, then their miracles did give offence; and they became exposed to a persecution, similar to that which had subjected Jesus to an ignominious and painful death. In this, therefore, as well as in other parts of the Gospel history, we observe a regular chain in the incidents, and a natural adaptation of motives to conduct, which it would be most difficult to counterfeit, and which therefore entitle it to the character of a probable and faithful narrative.

SUCH are the proofs, which establish the fact of the disciples having worked miracles during the life of their Master; and such, it appears to me, is the use and application of the circumstances attending this extraordinary fact. If it should seem to any one incredible, that these very men should relapse into doubt and suspicion, after exercising preternatural powers themselves; and that they should even abandon, in the most trying situation, the person, by whom these powers had been bestowed; let me intreat him to recollect the deep root, which national prepossession

possessions had taken in the minds of the collective Jewish people: and let me urge upon his understanding, in the memorable words of two illustrious ornaments of Christian antiquity, that, of all prepossessions, those, which are connected with religion, are the most fixed, and the most obstinate. To this effect is the declaration of the truly venerable Origen: εὐχερέσερον γε ἄνθρωπος τὰς περὶ ἄλλα συνήθειας, καὶ δυσαποσπάσως αὐτῶν ἔχῃ, παταλείψαι ἀν, η τὰς περὶ τὰ δόγματα. The eloquence of Chrysostom was employed in enforcing the same truth. "Οταν δὲ καὶ ἐν δόγμασιν η συνήθεια ἦ, βεβαιοτέρα γίνεται. πάντας γάρ τις εὐκολώτερον ἀμείψειε, η τὰ περὶ τὰς θρησκείας*.

IF, by shewing the conduct of the Apostles to be in strict conformity with the immutable principles of human nature, we shall extort a reluctant assent to the credibility of their testimony while the fact itself shall seem to expose them to censure; for their

* Apud Grot. de Jure Belli et Pacis, lib. II. c. 20. I find the same sentiment admirably expressed in the Bampton Lectures of Dr. White. "Prejudices derived from early education, and confirmed by habit, become, as it were, interwoven with our very constitution; and those opinions, which seem connected with the awful sanctions, and the precious interest, of religion, we are always disposed to watch with unusual jealousy, and to guard with unusual firmness." p. 77.

their weakness, and inconsistency, let me be indulged with the privilege of vindicating these honest but untutored men, whose only crime it is, not to have formed an exception to the common lot of mankind. Let me urge in their behalf, the difficulties, the almost insuperable difficulties, arising from early habit, prejudice, superstition, reverence to their superiors, a desire of worldly good.—But above all, let me plead their undaunted and steady defence of the truth, when at last it made its way to their hearts —their patient endurance of pain and contumely; distress and danger; and finally, even death itself; for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel. Magnanimous martyrs of Christian truth! If there be adversaries so irrational and unfeeling, as to impeach the competence of your understanding, or to question the extent of your integrity, on account of the errors and failings, which you have recorded with a candour and ingenuousness, such as alone should exempt you from censure, and from suspicion; let me blunt the keenness of their reproaches, and arrest the force of their reasoning, by employing the pathetic and forcible apology of a Christian Father in behalf of men, in

whose errors he had once shared, and for whom therefore he was enabled to urge the most extenuating pleas in the most persuasive language. Illi sœviant in vos, qui nesciunt quo cum labore verum inveniatur, et quām difficilē caveantur errores. Illi in vos sœviant, qui nesciunt quām rarum et arduum sit, carnalia phantasmata piæ mentis serenitate superare. Illi in vos sœviant, qui nesciunt quantâ difficultate sanetur oculus interioris hominis, ut possit intueri solem suum. Illi in vos sœviant, qui nesciunt quantis gemitibus et suspiriis fiat, ut ex quantulâcunque parte possit intelligi Deus. Postremò, illi in vos sœviant, qui nullo tali errore decepti sunt, quali vos deceptos videtis *.

* Augustin. apud Grot. ubi suprà.



CHAPTER V.

ON THE SCHEME OF THE GOSPEL.

Difference, between the mode and extent of Christ's preaching and that of the Apostles, stated.—made the ground of an objection by infidels.—Design of the Gospel.—offered to the Jews first—but intended from the first to comprehend the Gentiles.—Various proofs of this intention.—Rejection of it by the Jews foretold by our Lord, as well as the destruction of the Jewish polity.—Disciples acted in conformity with the views and directions of their Master.—If they had made any alteration, it would have been of a very different kind from that imputed to them.—No motive can be assigned for their conduct in this particular, but their well-grounded confidence in the pretensions of Jesus to the title of Messiah.—Improbabilities of any other supposition.

IN tracing the history of the Christian religion through its first stages, a striking difference is observable between the manner and the extent of Christ's preaching, and that of his Apostles. The salutary labours of the former were confined to Judea; his discourses were addressed to his countrymen, and his miracles, except in

three* remarkable instances, were exclusively wrought for their comfort and conviction. In one of the instances alluded to, he at first seemed to repel the entreaties of an heathen, who sought for an extension of his miraculous powers toward her child; and he declared that he was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel †. He conversed indeed with Gentiles; but he seems to have converted none, if we except Zaccheus ‡. In a charge given to his disciples, he expressly enjoined them not to go “into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel §.” He conformed, upon all occasions, to the Jewish ordinances, and enjoined the people to render obedience to the successors of Moses. His disciples, however, after his death, not only preached the Gospel in Samaria, but in every Heathen country; admitting the inhabitants to the rite of Baptism, and to the privileges of the dispensation which they published, without requiring them previously to submit to the yoke of

* The Centurion, the Syrophœnician woman, and the Samaritan leper.

† Matt. xv. 24.

‡ Matt. x. 5, 6.

§ Luke xix.



of the Mosaic law. Indeed they declared by a public edict, that circumcision was not necessary to be observed by their Heathen proselytes; and only required, that they would "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication *." In short, the substance of their preaching had the effect of superseding that law, which had so long, and so justly been reverenced by the Jews; a law which a declaration of our Saviour † *seemed* to profess his intention of establishing.

THIS difference between the manner, in which the Gospel was first published by Christ, and that, in which it was taught by his disciples, has furnished some unbelievers with an argument; in the refutation of which I shall endeavour to shew, that this very difference constitutes a strong proof of the truth of our religion. I shall quote the objections, which have been urged on this point by Mr. Chubb, and by Lord Bolingbroke, and then proceed to reply to them, as well as to state the proper inference from the

* Acts xv. 29. See, upon the concluding part of this verse, Michaelis by Marsh, Vol. I. p. 178.

† Matt. v. 17.

the fact in question.—Mr. Chubb affirms, “that the Apostles set out upon two principles, which may be considered as the foundation or corner-stone of the Christian building. 1. That Christianity is a supplement to Judaism, and therefore was to be grafted upon it; and that the law of Moses was not to be abolished, but still continued. 2. That the Gospel was a favour to be vouchsafed to the Jews only, and that to them only it was to be preached.” And he pretends, that “the Apostles were unavoidably led into these principles by their Master himself:” but that “in a little time they quite changed the original scheme or plan of Christianity; and dug up and destroyed the foundations they themselves had laid:” and then he asks, “How do we know in what instances they may be depended upon? and if they acted wrong in this, how does it appear that they ever acted right*?”

LORD Bolingbroke also represents Christianity “as an inconsistent scheme.” He maintains “that the New Testament consisteth of two Gospels, the one published by our

* Posthumous Works, Vol. II. p. 84, &c. See Leland’s View of Deistical writers, Vol. I. p. 256. 5th Edit. 1783.

our Saviour himself, and recorded by the Evangelists, and the other by St. Paul."

He observes, that "Christ was to outward appearance a Jew, and ordered his disciples to do what the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's chair, taught: and that, when he commissioned his Apostles to teach and baptize all nations, he only meant it of the Jews dispersed into all nations." He asserts, that "the mystery of God's taking the Gentiles to be his people without subjecting them to circumcision, or the law of Moses, was inconsistent with the declarations and practice of Jesus." He asks therefore, "if this was the purpose of God, to take the Gentiles to be his people under the Messiah, how came it that the Messiah himself gave no instructions about it to his Apostles, when he sent them to preach his gospel to all nations? Why was the revelation of this important mystery, so necessary at the first publication of the Gospel, reserved for St. Paul, who had been a persecutor? Shall we say, that this eternal purpose of the Father, was unknown to the Son? Or that, if it was known to him, he neglected to communicate it to the first preachers of the Gospel?" "He seems to think

think these questions unanswerable, and that the *pertness* and *impudence* of the men, that pretend to account for these things, deserve no regard *."

THESE writers plainly found their arguments upon the information they have derived from the books of the New Testament; alleging, in proof of them, the supposed silence of Jesus Christ, as to those material parts of the Christian scheme, upon which it is allowed that the disciples acted. It will however be discovered, upon an attentive examination of the sacred volumes, that they must have been perused cursorily and superficially by these objectors; since it appears, that those parts evidently did belong to the dispensation, of which Jesus was the author. The plan of that dispensation was arranged in such a manner, that the first knowledge of it, and the first offer of the blessings attending it, should be communicated to the Jews. Upon their rejecting the Gospel, which was foreseen and provided for by the Father of the universe, it was to be announced to all other nations; and from that period, (the necessity

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. pp. 305, 326, 328.
See Leland, Vol. II. p. 185.

necessity for the peculiar institutions of Moses being done away), the principles of a religion, fitted for the acceptance of the whole human race, were to succeed. Consistently with this design, the labours of our blessed Saviour were, during the short time of his ministry, confined to Judea; nevertheless he revealed more fully the will of the Deity, and signified the greater extent of his plan, upon various occasions, and in a very direct manner; insomuch that any subsequent notification of this intention to his disciples would have been unnecessary, if their understandings had not been so darkened by worldly views, and obstinate prejudices, that they were scarcely capable of comprehending the plainest declarations.

IN order to examine this subject accurately and extensively, it will be right to consider the intimations, given by our Saviour, (sometimes plainly and openly, but frequently in dark and figurative terms,) concerning those particulars, in which this irreconcileable difference between his preaching, and that of the Apostles, is supposed to consist. Nor can we commence this examination better, than by remarking the

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pains he took to rectify the notions of his hearers, respecting the kingdom of God.

WITH this phrase, by a very natural association, were intimately connected those wrong ideas, which the Jews entertained concerning the Messiah. Temporal blessings and national distinction were, in their opinion, the necessary concomitants of this long expected reign; to which was added some confused and indistinct conception of a deliverance from the consequences of moral imperfection. Now the character of those, for whom the glories of this kingdom were reserved, would necessarily form a criterion, whereby to judge of it's peculiar nature, and distinct advantages. Our Lord therefore used a very effectual way to correct these mistaken opinions, in the very outset of his ministry, by declaring that the poor in spirit, that the mourners, that the meek, that the merciful, that the pure in heart, that the peacemakers, that those which are persecuted for righteousness' sake*, were they, to whom the kingdom of Heaven would be assigned—descriptions of persons these, who are of all others the most unlikely

* Matt. v.

unlikely to attain honour or distinction in a kingdom, such as the Jews vainly expected, and absurdly wished for. He afterwards expressly declared, that it would be almost impossible for the great men of the world* to render themselves worthy of admission into his kingdom. He intimated, that the service of this kingdom was, at that peculiar juncture, not only productive of the greatest inconveniences, but also incompatible with an attention to worldly, and even domestic, concerns †. That the dignity, with which he was invested, and the titles, by which he was distinguished, extended not to those matters in which temporal authority is chiefly exercised, appeared by his peremptorily declining to take cognizance of a question of worldly right. “Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you ‡?” Upon another occasion, when a question was put to him upon this subject, fraught with all the erroneous notions then current among the Jews; he replied in a manner, which though it was not calculated to meet their wishes, yet ought to have convinced them of

* Luke xviii. 25.

† Luke ix. 57, &c.

‡ Luke xii. 14. See Newcome, p. 467.

of their mistake. “ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you*.”

He however, who “ knew what was in man †,” was aware that his kingdom, thus explained, would be so far from meeting a ready acceptance on the part of the Jews, that on the contrary they would despise and reject it—so far from hailing him as their prince and deliverer, they would treat him as an outcast, and destroy him as a blasphemer. And accordingly we find, throughout the New Testament, many declarations, more or less plain, from the mouth of Jesus himself, upon this very subject. “ The rejection of the Gospel by the Jews, was foretold under the following parables: one, of a certain man who made a great supper, and bade many, and who was angry at the rude excuses, which all unanimously sent him: another of a king, who made a marriage-feast for his son, and who suffered not only the indignity of neglect, but the outrage

* Luke xvii. 20.

† John ii. 25.

rage of having his servants shamefully entreated, and his beloved son slain *.”

THAT the consequence of this obdurate inattention on the part of the Jews would be the rejection of that nation from the favour and protection of God, was repeatedly and emphatically foreshewn by our blessed Lord. I refer, for a variety of proofs, to the excellent work of Abp. Newcome †; and shall content myself with remarking upon this head, that our Lord’s language, although highly figurative, was so well adapted to the comprehension of his audience, that after he had delivered an awful prediction of the miseries, which were to fall upon that devoted nation, “the chief priests and the scribes, the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them ‡.”

As the Jews, though the very people, for whom the Gospel was primarily intended, and to whom it was first promulgated, were prepared to spurn the gracious offer; our Lord

* Vid. Newcome p. 392. See also p. 198. and Luke xiv. 21. Matt. xxii. 7. and Luke xx. 9.

† pp. 199—203.

‡ Luke xx. 19. See the parallel passage in Matt. xxi. 45. and observe ver. 31. of the same chapter.

Lord pointed out, both by express declarations and symbolic* representations, that the good tidings of salvation would be more joyfully and gratefully received among other people. He distinctly taught, that the gospel was to be preached among all nations †; and also that it would be received in such a manner, as to secure to the Gentiles a preference in it's blessings over the ungrateful sons of Abraham. Generally indeed he conveyed this, and other disagreeable truths, under the form of parables ‡; but that no doubt might remain of his meaning, he scrupled not to employ the most unequivocal declarations. Thus when he healed the servant of the centurion, "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east, and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing

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* See Newcome, 163, 165, 345.

† Matth. xxvi. 13. Luke xxiv. 47. Mark xiii. 10. Vid. Newcome p. 193. I refer to this writer, not only for the purpose of shewing, that the passages quoted are not strained to the argument I have in view; but because a frequent reference to this work will be of use to every one, who wishes to understand the New Testament.

‡ Newcome, p. 152.

ing of teeth *." He made a similar declaration in favour of Zaccheus † : and he thus concluded a parable, which was addressed to the Jewish rulers. "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof ‡."

To us, who can examine our Lord's conduct and discourses, abstracted from the prejudices which infested the minds of the Jews, it may seem, that the tenour of his declarations upon topics, so closely connected with the preservation, or destruction, of the Mosaic ritual, would have been sufficient to point out, that it's end was then answered ; and that, having effected the purposes, to which it was subservient, it would of necessity terminate. The universality of the new dispensation, the qualifications of it's future members, added to the demolition of the temple at Jerusalem, with the ruin of the Jewish polity, might have made a nation, not entirely blinded by former views, understand, that the law was to be absorbed in the Gospel. This however was not the case. It seems that they, who could bear

* Matt. viii. 11. See also Luke xiii. 28, &c.

† Luke xix. 9.

‡ Matth. xxi. 43. See Newcome, 192. 371. 387. 480.

allow themselves with some degree of complacency to hear of the destruction of the temple, could not endure an intimation, levelled against the rites and ceremonies of the temple. Accordingly this was one of the most delicate points, upon which the discourses of our Lord could turn: yet even this offensive truth he did not entirely conceal, though he touched upon it with the utmost circumspection. I must refer my reader upon this topic to a writer whom I have often had occasion to commend, and will only cite his concluding observations. ‘There are’ certainly ‘many occasions, on which he speaks honourably of the law. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” I am not come to abrogate it prematurely and unnaturally; but to accomplish its typical and prophetical declarations, and to supersede it by a law of grace and truth*. “It is easier for Heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail.” “What is written in the law? How readest thou?” However he plainly intimates

* In what sense the law of Jesus Christ is eminently deserving of this appellation, is shewn by Jortin, Discourses concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 235, &c.

intimates the superior excellence of the Gospel covenant. “Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he.” When he observes that “all the prophets and the law prophesied until John,” he asserts their subserviency to the gospel covenant. And when he says to the pharisees in another place, “The law and the prophets were until John,” there is a very remarkable implication, that the ceremonial law subsisted no longer to the members of the kingdom of Heaven. This was one of the truths, which his disciples could not bear*.

WHOEVER

* Newcome, p. 479. and loc. ibi citat. The sentiment, with which the Archbishop concludes, is to be kept in mind continually, while we are perusing the histories of the Evangelists. For, however plain and obvious the intentions and professions of Jesus Christ may appear to us, yet it is certain, that the disciples, from a mixture of prejudice and dulness, comprehended nothing of the Gospel scheme, till after their Master’s death. There was no point, which he explained so clearly, or repeated so often to them, as his own approaching sufferings, and death, and resurrection.—Yet how apparent is it, not only from the positive assertions of the Evangelists, but from the equally striking evidence of their conduct at his apprehension, that they did not understand these plain and positive declarations! See Mark viii. 32. ix. 10, 32. “They understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.” Luke ix. 45. xviii. 34. “They understood none

WHOEVER considers the spirit of these various and concurring declarations, cannot, I think, maintain with any colour of reason, that, when JesuS enjoined his disciples, to "go and teach all nations," or as it is elsewhere expressed, to "preach the Gospel to every creature *," he only meant it of the Jews, dispersed into all nations †: or that, when they preached against the necessity of circumcision, and the permanence of the law, they inculcated a doctrine, unauthorised by their Master, and inconsistent with the original plan of his mission. In fact, the scope and design of his undertaking cannot be delineated more perfectly, nor the conduct to be pursued by the Apostles pointed out more clearly, than in the words which

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none of these things; and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things, which were spoken." See moreover John x. 6. and xii. 16. If they manifested such flowness of comprehension, and such reluctance of assent, to positive and unequivocal assertions; it is not to be wondered at, that a similar degree of ignorance should prevail concerning matters, which did not at that time admit of such clear and precise information. It deserves to be remembered, that the marked expressions alluded to by Newcome, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," were uttered only the day before his crucifixion, which plainly argues, that the more full information there hinted at, was to be conveyed at a time posterior to his death. See John xvi. 12.

* Matt. xxviii. 19. and Mark xvi. 15.

† Lord Bolingbroke ubi sup.

he addressed to them after his resurrection. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And again, to remove, as it should seem, the possibility of misconception; in reply to a question from one of his disciples, which strongly shewed the taint of their old prepossessions, he still more particularly said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*."

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* Luke xxiv. 46. Acts i. 8. I cannot omit quoting one more passage from Abp. Newcome, on the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God—premising, however, that these declarations in favour of the Gentiles seem to me clearly to intimate, that the peculiar rites of the law would be abrogated. For what such peculiar favour would be manifested to the Gentiles by a permission to embrace the law of Moses, which they were already enabled to do, whosoever they chose? But to admit them to the privileges and blessings of God's people, without imposing at the same time the yoke of the Mosaic law, this was truly a blessing, worthy to be predicted by the Prophets, and to be dispensed by the Son of God. "This part of the divine counsels" (observes the Abp.) "is early mentioned in the Gospels, to shew, that it was not an after-thought on the rejection of Christ by the Jews. It was referred to by Simeon, when the child was presented in the temple. The appearance of the star to the Arabian Magi, shewed that the Gentiles had an interest in the

IT appears therefore manifest, from the conduct and the discourses of Jesus Christ, that the dispensation, which he announced, was intended for the reception and the advantage of the whole race of mankind; but that, in strict conformity with the favour which the Almighty had hitherto shewn to the Jewish nation, they were to be the first objects of his care, the first partakers of his bounty. This preference was however fully explained to consist in the order of time, not in the quality of the gifts. Accordingly the labours of the divine Saviour were confined to Judea; and there, as suited "the eternal purpose*" of the Godhead, his humiliation was complete, and his sufferings were fully accomplished. But, notwithstanding that the short period of his ministry allowed him not to extend his personal services to the Heathens; and that the circumstances and situation of the Jews were such as to render more plain and unequivocal marks of attention to other nations inconsistent with the success of his mission; nevertheless

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birth of Christ: and John the Baptist alluded to the conversion of the Heathen, when he taught the Pharisees and Sadducees, that God was able of the very stones to raise children unto Abraham." p. 480. and loc. ibi. cit.

* Ephes. iii. 11.

we find, that he took occasion to explain the full meaning and purport of the Gospel scheme, in terms not hard to be understood.

THIS conduct in every instance, as far as the difference of situation would allow, was imitated by his Apostles, and particularly by St. Paul.—After the ascension of their Lord, they confined themselves for a considerable time to Judea; and even when they went into foreign nations, they always addressed themselves first to their own countrymen. Jerusalem was the only residence of the infant church, for some period after the death of it's founder; and when a violent persecution dispersed the other members, the Apostles remained at Jerusalem*. We are also told, that they, who were scattered abroad upon occasion of this persecution, though they “travelled as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch,” yet preached “the word to none, but unto the Jews only†.” That it was St. Paul's constant practice to address himself in the first instance to the Jews, in every Heathen country, there is abundant testimony in the narrative of his actions, written by St. Luke‡.

And

* Acts viii. 1.

† Acts xi. 19.

‡ See Acts xiii. 5, 46. xvii. 2. xviii. 4, 6, &c.

And this same Apostle, who has been so unjustly accused of setting up a Gospel of his own, in opposition to that of Jesus Christ, though he strenuously contends that there is no distinction between the Jew and Greek *, yet wherever a priority can be maintained, pleads in favour of the Jew : “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile †.”

HENCE it appears that, instead of any contradiction, the most complete harmony prevails, in reality, throughout the system, as taught by Jesus, and acted upon by his disciples; nor is there any other difference, than what may be supposed very naturally to exist between the various parts of a comprehensive scheme, which is gradually matured to perfection.

WE may now proceed to observe, that, if the Apostles had undertaken to alter the drift and design of the Gospel from sordid or ambitious views, as these unbelievers insinuate, the alteration would in that case have been of a nature directly opposite. Or, if the design of Christianity, as unfolded
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* Rom. x. 12. Galat. iii. 28.

† This is particularly to be noticed, when he is writing to the Romans. See c. i. 16. and ii. 9, 10. See also Acts iii. 26. What Dr. Campbell has urged on this point, deserves attention. Preface to Matthew’s Gospel, sect. 12.

by it's Author, was really what his adversaries have represented; upon this supposition, no alteration would have taken place in the original plan, if they, who are now charged with substituting their own ideas, for those of their Master, had acted with any sinister intention. Instead of making the scheme more liberal, and enlarged; instead of carrying the benevolent and enlightened purposes of Jesus still farther; they would have cramped and narrowed it, or at least confined it within it's first limits. They would have acted in conformity with their avowed notions, and prepossessions, not in direct contradiction to them. For if, when their Master was alive, and when they were in the habit of paying attention to his authority, they either did not, or would not, hearken to those suggestions, which militated against their own feelings and opinions; it is not likely, that, when he was gone, and they were left to act and to think for themselves, they should carry into effect, with singular zeal and ardour, those very suggestions.—If they had acted upon their own views of things, and followed the dictates of their own inclination, we should not at this day hear them charged with any intentional

intentional hostility towards their antient polity and institutions; but we should have found most undoubtedly, that, in this part of their conduct at least, they would have resembled those of their countrymen, who remained so wedded to the rites and ceremonies of their forefathers, as to combine an adherence to the tenets of the Gospel, with the most rigid observance of the law*.

THIS position follows so directly, from what, I trust, has been established in the foregoing pages of this work, that it is unnecessary to dwell any longer upon the subject of these ill-founded objections. It remains for me only to deduce a more legitimate conclusion from premises more accurately stated: I shall therefore endeavour to prove, that the difference, such as it is acknowledged to be, between the doctrines openly maintained, and acted upon, by Jesus, and by his followers, forms in reality a very strong presumption, that the disciples were not under the influence of error, or any wrong impression whatsoever; but that they

* Such were those Christians of Syria, who abandoned Peregrinus, because he had eaten unclean meats. Παραμήσας τι καὶ εἰς ἔκεινος, as Lucian contemptuously expresses himself, ὡφθη γάρ τι, ως οἴμαι, ισθίων τῶν ἀποξέρητων αὐτοῖς. Tom. II. p. 570. Amstel. 1687.

they taught and acted from the honest and irresistible impulse of well grounded conviction.

IT has been already granted, that the part of the Christian Religion, which was carried into execution during the life of it's founder, appears narrow and confined in comparison of the whole, which was gradually developed after his death. Now it is material to observe, that it was developed and unfolded in those very points and circumstances, which his followers were most unwilling to admit, or comply with, during his life time. The question then which is proposed to our examination, is this, How it came to pass, that the conceptions of the Apostles were purified, and their ideas enlarged, upon the very points, in which, during their Master's life-time, they had been conspicuously narrow and illiberal? Let us suppose for a moment, that our blessed Saviour was an impostor or an enthusiast: when he was put to death, surely that fatal termination of his projects must have exposed his artifices or his folly; and according to all human reasoning, put an end to the delusion of his followers, and at once crushed the party. But we find in

fact, that his credit, so far from suffering at his death, increased in lustre daily; and his party, so far from being diminished, accumulated in numbers, till it overspread the world. Let us then make another improbable supposition—for indeed, upon any other ground of reasoning, than the truth of Christianity, it is necessary to suppose so many improbabilities, that it is far more rational, more truly philosophical, at once to admit it—Let us suppose, that his followers, not angry, or disappointed at the melancholy and unexpected termination of their personal and national hopes, conceived the strange design of entering more fully into an imposture, of which they themselves had been the chief victims; and of adding to it a scheme of their own, by a dangerous and improbable tale, the falsehood of which might easily have been detected. We are to suppose them asserting, contrary to evident truth, that their crucified Lord was risen from the dead, and ascended into Heaven; and that they were commissioned to preach a doctrine, much more particular and explicit in every unpopular notion, than that taught by their Master; publickly declaring, that the necessity

cessity of circumcision had then ceased; that the peculiar sanctions of the Mosaic Law were no longer to be regarded; and that the Gentiles, who acknowledged the authority of Jesus Christ, were to be admitted into the closest intimacy and communion. Upon what principle can we account for it, that these men should enter so very fully into the peculiar views of their Master after he was dead, when they would not so much as hear them mentioned, when he was alive? Till the time of his death, they were "zealous of the law," and thought of the Messiah exactly as the rest of their countrymen: after his death, they became careless of the law, and entertained quite a different notion of the Messiah from the rest of their countrymen. Their sentiments, their manners, their whole heart and mind underwent a complete change, without any apparent or adequate cause. Before the death of Jesus, they were selfish, bigoted Jews, timid in their conduct, bent upon temporal good: afterwards they were most disinterested in their views, and liberal in their principles; in their actions they were courageous and decisive, and devoted to nothing so little as temporal

good. They were then ready to endure, and actually did endure, every species of oppression and suffering, in defence of opinions, and of conduct, which, during their Master's life, they would have looked upon with abhorrence. Such a change was never wrought in any set of men, since the world began, by the operation of human causes: and certainly interest, vanity, and national feeling, (motives these, to which the disciples had shewn they were not insensible) these were all diametrically opposed to the conduct they then adopted. Now if any one shall attempt to reconcile these facts with the supposition, that the pretensions of Jesus Christ were founded in fraud or delusion, he deserves to be pitied for his credulity, or censured for his obstinacy. For, in any scheme of imposture, the whole plan would naturally be laid by the first contriver: and it cannot be doubted, but that Jesus far outshone his disciples in abilities. He was the main-spring, the contriver of the whole, if there were any contrivance: and when he fell, the contrivance must have fallen with him. The disciples had neither abilities, nor motives, to continue the fraud; and if they had, they

they would certainly have acted somewhat in conformity with their former narrow and peculiar notions; and not have gone beyond their Master in the very sentiments and practices, which were most adverse to their own, as well as to those of their countrymen. If we discredit the pretensions of Jesus, we must suppose him designing a plan, too extensive and capacious, even for his associates to act upon; for we find that he could not hint at what they thought the anti-Mosaic part of the system, without exciting in their minds the utmost surprise and astonishment. We must then suppose him to have been cut off, before he had sufficiently gained over the minds of his followers to these peculiar notions, or even fully informed them what these notions were—and yet, after his death; when that death must, according to all human probability, have put an end to the plot, or at least to any desire in the Apostles to continue it; we find them on a sudden not only completely instructed in what they had no means of knowing*, but at last straining every

* The reader will bear in mind what has been said before of the inability of the disciples to comprehend their Master's meaning upon these peculiar subjects. It is this exact conformity

every nerve to accomplish that design, which before had excited their antipathy.

So marvellous, so utterly unintelligible does the history of the origin of Christianity appear, supposing it to have been the offspring of misconception or imposture: but if we allow it's divine origin, every circumstance and fact becomes not only possible, but in the highest degree probable and natural. We may admit the prejudices of the disciples to have been as strong, as they really were, during their Master's life: we may admit their wilful ignorance of the peculiar and enlarged doctrines of the Gospel: we may admit them to have been disappointed at his death, and despairing of his return to life: yet, if he really rose from the dead; if he then instructed them more fully in all the doctrines of Christianity, of which he had given them only hints before; and if he afterwards enforced and confirmed these doctrines by peculiar revelations; then the knowledge of the disciples in those points, of which before they were confess-

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formity between the allusions and intimations of Jesus himself, (which they confessedly did not understand, and which therefore could not have directed their conduct afterwards) and between that very conduct, so opposite to all their previous notions and prejudices, which constitutes so strong a proof of the absence of imposture,

edly ignorant, and their zeal in those matters, to which they had before expressed reluctance, are so far from being unaccountable, that it would be a matter of just surprise, had they acted in a different manner.

IT appears therefore, that they, who have urged against the Christian religion the objections before stated, have extremely mistaken the grounds, upon which their arguments are rested. The only improbability in this case can be, that the disciples should promote with so much ardour the enlarged and comprehensive views of their Master, although, whenever those views were intimated at an earlier period, they either "did not understand," or "could not bear" them. The only explanation, which can be given of this fact, at all satisfactory to my mind, is, that they were fully persuaded of his resurrection from the dead; and that his authority then, and not till then, had the effect of making them submit their thoughts, and their actions, implicitly to his direction. Nothing short of this can sufficiently account for their proceeding to propagate the Gospel doctrines after the death of Jesus; and particularly, for propagating them in
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the manner, and to the extent, which are stated in the sacred history *.

* I trust, that the reader is now enabled fully to appreciate the value of some objections, or rather insinuations, relative to this very subject, which are to be found in Mr. Gibbon's History, Vol. I. pp. 455, 6. 4to. 1st Edit. They are not, in my opinion, deserving of notice so much from their own importance, as from their connection with that very splendid monument of human industry and abilities. I wish I could add the praise of candour to that of learning and of talent, when I am desirous of stating the merits of this celebrated performance: but whatever may be thought of the motives which led to his attack upon Christianity, his mode of carrying on that attack has merited, and incurred, universal reprobation. See Mr. Porson's admirable appreciation of Mr. Gibbon's merits, in Letters to Archdeacon Travis, preface, pp. 28, 29. See also White's Bampton Lectures, p.—153. The subject of the coincidence between the law and the Gospel is ably treated in the Lectures, pp. 362—383.



C H A P T E R VI.

ON THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

Malignity and extent of the charge, urged by unbelievers against the Christian religion.—Particularly as it affects the character of Jesus.—An objection against producing the testimony of his friends obviated.—Concessions of his adversaries upon this point.—Vanini.—Chubb.—Bolingbroke.—Rousseau.—Voltaire.—Paine.—Gibbon.—Lequinio.—What the intentions of Jesus must have been, according to the assumptions of his enemies.—Their own concessions shewn to be at variance with these assumptions.—Different grounds of argument, taken by unbelievers, examined.—The imputation of imposture shewn to be inconsistent with the character of the virtues, which they allow him to have possessed.—Near inspection, to which the conduct of our Lord was subjected.—Yet no instance of any deviation from moral rectitude.—Compared with Minos.—Numa.—Lycurgus.—Mahomet.—The scheme of Jesus, if founded in fraud, less excusable than those of these acknowledged deceivers.—Consequently not imputable to one of his good character.—Inquiry whether he could have been actuated by any good motive to assume false pretensions.—answered in the negative.

TH E adversaries of Christianity have been ever forward to accuse its friends of prejudice and bigotry, of a disposition to impute improper motives to their opponents,

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and of a disinclination to hearken to the deductions of sound reasoning. It will be readily allowed that, in a struggle for superiority, combatants sometimes overlook the real grounds of contest, and use improper weapons both of attack and defence. It is unavoidable that, in proportion to the real or fancied importance of every object in dispute, the exertions of the contending parties should be increased; and that, as they are more or less solicitous for the honour or advantage of victory, their passions should be stimulated to a more or less violent degree of emotion. But it is not so generally true, as has been pretended, that the parties in religious disputes are more virulent and intolerant, than where the cause of difference is wholly unconnected with theology*: nor if the fact be true, does

* My meaning will perhaps be better understood, if I cite a passage from Jacobus Facciolatus in his speech upon the following subject: *Latina lingua non est ex Grammaticorum libris comparanda.*

Percurrete, si vacat, quæ solent homines libellorum suorum initio longissimè præfari, ubi cæteris, qui ante se de re grammaticâ scripsere, diem dicunt; eorum lucubrations mendosæ, nugaces, fordidas, cloacinas (sit verbo Scioppiano venia) audacissimè appellant; séque, ex Deorum immortalium sede quasi delapsos, allatueros optima pollicentur. Cumque singuli et universi eadem recinant, quò se vertant miseri adolescentes? cui se, tanquam duci, tradant germanâ latinitate instituendos?

Numquid

does it cast that exclusive opprobrium upon the cause of religion, which unbelievers have affected to consider as properly resulting from it. Undoubtedly however it is not

Numquid Varroni? at literarum porcus dicitur à Palæmone. Num Prisciano? at Græcum hominem Latinæ linguæ fucum fecisse existimat Alvarus. Num Vallæ? At ejus elegantias Ramirezius de Prado inelegantes appellat. Num Donato, num Probo, num Servio, num Charisio? At hos omnes passim labi, et monstra effutire contendit Scioppius. Num denique Scioppio ipsi? at miserabilis literator dicitur ab Hornio, vir desultoriæ levitatis à Labbeo, canis grammaticus à Lambecio. Indignamini ad hæc, Auditores! sed artis, mihi credite, seu vitio, seu fato quodam fieri solet, ut nec sua quisquam afferre possit, nisi carpat aliena, nec aliena carpere, nisi modum excedat, Quàm indecoræ, quàm pudendæ, quàm propè insanæ fuêre contentiones illæ Poggii cum Vallâ, Politiani cum Merulâ, Scaligeri cum Erasmo, de rebus his minutissimis, quasi de aris et focis! Quàm illa ridicula Francisci Philelphi cum Timotheo quodam Græco, qui, de vi syllabæ pugnaturi, eâ lege in aciem ex composito descenderunt, ut victus barbâ mulestaretur! etc. Edit. Walchii, Lips. 1715. p. 9.

The learned reader is doubtless well acquainted with the vindictive and savage retort of Scaliger upon Muretus, in consequence of the verses, which Muretus sent him as written by Trabeas, and which Scaliger published as genuine, in his Commentary upon Varro.

The general arrogance and intolerance of Scaliger, in the conduct of his literary controversies, are very properly censured by Saxius in his Onomasticon. Vid. Analecta Partis 3æ. Tom. III. p. 644. Traj. ad Rhen. 1780.

For the violence and indecorum of even philosophical disputes, we may appeal to Lucian, Bis Accusat. Tom. II. p. 220. and Symposium, five Lapithæ, 633, &c.

Above all, we may remind those, who inveigh with so much bitterness against Odium Theologicum, that the partizans in Political quarrels have never been disposed to yield the palm, either for obstinacy in opinion, vehemence in language, or illiberality in conduct.

not true, that the friends of religion can, with a greater degree of reason, be censured for the want of candour and moderation in supporting the important cause at issue, than it's antagonists. The very ground of all attacks upon the divine origin of the Gospel, if we attend properly to the nature and extent of the charge implied, will abundantly illustrate and confirm these observations.

It is proposed to confine the present inquiry to the proof resulting from the moral character of our blessed Lord; and in the prosecution of it, after some preliminary remarks, the opinion of writers friendly to the Christian cause will be noticed, and at the same time occasion will be taken to meet an objection, which is frequently urged against the validity and impartiality of their conclusions; in the next place, the concessions of some hostile writers upon this important point, will be produced; whence, lastly, it will be shown, that all the hypotheses, which have been framed to account for the origin of the Christian religion independently of it's truth, will be found utterly irreconcileable with the acknowledged excellence of Christ's moral character.

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THE character of Jesus, as it is set forth in the histories of his actions without any apparent design on the part of the writers to compose a panegyric, is that of a man truly benevolent; endowed with every species of active as well as passive virtue*; and free even from the imputation of every improper motive, if we except the charge made by those who deny his divine mission: and this, as it is the very point in contest between the friends and enemies of Christianity, must not enter at present into the consideration of ourselves or our opponents.

PUTTING aside then this single point of assuming pretensions, to which he had no just title, there cannot be a doubt but that Jesus was possessed of exemplary virtue. And his good qualities are set forth, as I have had occasion before to observe, not by any regular attempt at panegyric, but by a plain artless narrative of transactions, from which the reader is left at full liberty to draw his own conclusions. Patience under injuries, fortitude under sufferings, humility, kindness, temperance, are strikingly exemplified in his character: an honest indignation

* Christus, says Le Clerc justly and forcibly, *unicum omnium virtutum, veræque adeò constantiæ exemplar abso-lutissimum.* Ad Gen. xxvii. 34.

tion against vice, a generous contempt of hypocrisy, a manly feeling in behalf of every thing that is connected with honour and benevolence, are strongly pourtrayed in his conduct. Nor is his doctrine less entitled to praise than his conduct : it reaches the very sublimity of religious and moral excellence: it inculcates the noble lesson of returning good for evil: it teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves: it tends to banish all low, selfish, and sordid considerations; and so far from restraining our benevolent exertions to our friends or our country, it comprehends within the sphere of our duty the whole race of our fellow creatures. But it may be said, the character of Jesus is drawn by his friends and associates. Be it so. Yet if we cannot trace in their writings any symptom of partiality, any appearance of a wrong bias; if we cannot discover any mark of a wish to pervert, or to suppress the truth ; we cannot, upon any principles of common sense or justice, call their testimony in question. And surely if any design of elevating the fame of their Master by undue representations had existed, it is scarcely possible, but that the attempt would have been traced.

traced by the diligence of those, who have disputed the truth of these accounts, and have endeavoured to assign reasons for their incredulity. Had any such intention been observable, no doubt it would have been pointed out long since by some of that host of writers, who have supported the infidel cause. And if the representations of the sacred historians had not been founded in truth, were there not enemies *, virulent and powerful enemies, for a long time after the promulgation of Christianity, in possession of power and influence; so that the means of discovering the truth, had it been favourable to their cause, were in their own hands? The machinations of fraud, or the phantoms of imagination, have seldom, if ever, opposed themselves with success to the operation of human means, or the effects of worldly influence: and in this case, so eagerly as prejudice and power interfered to arrest the progress of the Gospel, it is not conceivable, how it could have succeeded against the native vigour of truth and virtue, as well as the pride of opinion and the force of authority. Yet notwithstanding
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* This argument is handled by Prideaux, Letter to the Deists, pp. 153, 157, 163. Ed. 1723. This little tract contains much clear and forcible reasoning upon the evidences of Christianity; though it be not equally judicious throughout.

that the passion of it's adversaries was thus invigorated by the arm of power, and the terrore of the sword was combined with the "oppositions of science" to crush the rising seat, no stigma has hitherto been successfully fixed upon the reputation of it's founder; not a breath of slander sullied it in the early days of Christianity, if we except the calumnies of his Jewish persecutors; and even infidel zeal has never presumed to insult it with any other reproach, than that of fraud or fanaticism. It has however been already remarked, that the justice of this reproach is the very point in question between the defenders, and the antagonists, of our holy religion. It is not to be taken for granted by us, without adducing the substantial weight of proof for the assertion, that our blessed Saviour was incapable of the one or the other: nor are they to assume the contrary, without appealing to the same evidence of facts. It is incumbent upon both parties to collect from his general conduct, calling into their aid the testimony of friends, and the concessions of foes, how far it is compatible with reason and candour, to suspect him of gross error or artifice. If the general character be determined,

terminated, from any fair source of investigation, to be such as to render him liable to the charge of imposture or enthusiasm, we may then consider how far, in the alleged instance, the imputation be just, if, on the other hand, his general character and conduct clearly exempt him from the suspicion of both, we may fairly call upon our adversaries to abstain from a charge, which is completely repelled by the general conduct, and not justified in the particular instance, where they are desirous of fixing it.

THE character of our Lord is a subject, which has occupied the thoughts, and exercised the talents, of the wisest and best men * in every age, since his religion was first announced to the world. It is a subject which could not fail to be investigated by those, who have professedly considered how far his pretensions, as a divine teacher, were founded in truth. Accordingly, they who have asserted, as well as they who have denied, that he was commissioned from on high, have scrutinized his actions with the most diligent and anxious care. The result
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* See the authors referred to in the preface to Abp. Newcome's Observations on our Lord's conduct, &c.

of the investigations, employed by the former, is of course highly favourable to the character of Jesus; since they could not otherwise have conceived him deserving of the sacred title of a prophet, authorised to communicate so full and so important a revelation of the will of God to his creatures. But notwithstanding their belief in his divine mission, their authority is not to be neglected, nor the reasons, upon which their conclusions are founded, therefore to be disregarded—even by those, who would take a survey of the evidences of this religion, upon grounds the most impartial, and with views the most liberal. If indeed any symptoms of incapacity, of prejudice, of unfairness, appear in the course of their investigations, we may then lay aside their testimony; as we should be justified, for the same reasons, in laying aside that of the historians, who supply materials for the inquiry. But if the writers, who have finally rested their faith on the pretensions of Jesus, are not destitute of candour, of judgement, of fidelity; if they are not inferior in these qualities to those, who have espoused the opposite party; their conclusions are entitled to our acquiescence, and their authority

rity to our deference, as much as those of any other writers, upon any other subject of science or of morals. We might therefore boldly appeal to our adversaries, whether they can disprove the conclusions which Law, and White*, and Newcome have drawn in favour of the exemplary virtue of Jesus. Nor should the vulgar consideration, that these writers were priests, and therefore interested in drawing the conclusions for which they have contended, detract from the weight of their observations, or the soundness of their arguments. If, as priests, they be supposed to lean towards the cause of a profession, which is sometimes attended with emolument or distinction; yet the mere wish to serve a particular cause would not enable them to establish a position, which must look for support to a series of historical testimony. It would not enable them to wrest facts to their purpose, which are inscribed in the unvarying records of past ages; it would not enable them to suppress or distort evidence, which is interspersed in
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* See Law's Reflections on the life and character of Christ. White's Bampton Lectures. Sermons IV. and particularly the Vth. See also Blair, Vol. V. Sermon III.

the writings of men of every party and of every country; it would not enable them to produce those internal marks of truth and nature, to which they have appealed in confirmation of their opinions. Nothing but conviction could have impelled so many writers to handle the same subject, to place it in so many different lights, to support it with such unaffected zeal, and such overpowering argument. We may moreover remark, that not merely priests of an established Church, whose situation sometimes leads to wealth and consequence; but priests of every sect—priests who have nothing to expect but opposition, if they are known; or poverty, if they are not known—nay, priests who have altogether abandoned their profession—men in short of the most discordant views, and hostile sentiments, have still supported with uniform conviction, and maintained with unvarying ardour, the truth of the Christian dispensation. In this latter description of writers, we may remark the names of Priestley, Wakefield, and Evanson; of men, who differing from each other, as much as they dissent from the national Church, yet upon the same general grounds of historical truth, admit the divine origin of Christianity.

Nor

Nor must we fail to reply, if the objection should still be urged pertinaciously, that Laymen of the most distinguished abilities, and of the most enlarged views, have in all ages vied with Churchmen in the pious and useful labour of fixing, upon the solid basis of reason and of truth, the credibility of the Gospel history. So far then as their statements are built upon facts, and their conclusions logically deduced, there is no pretence for withholding assent to the arguments in favour of the character of Jesus, though they chance to fall from the pen of a priest or a prelate. With the reservation therefore of my right to avail myself of the labours of such men upon this interesting topic, yet I hold it needless to appeal to them* : though I anxiously wish the impartial reader to weigh, coolly and dispassionately, the result of their investigations. Such has been
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* I am aware that the character of Jesus can only finally be ascertained by a reference to those original documents, in which his actions are recorded, and which are open to the inspection of all ages and all parties ; and that nothing is admissible upon the subject, that is not strictly consistent with, or regularly deduced from, their testimony. As however these documents have been consulted with the utmost care, and quoted with the strictest accuracy, by the authors above referred to, particularly by Newcome ; I thought it right to obviate any objections, which might have been urged against their authority ; and to shew that they would have been equally worthy of attention, if the result of their investigation had materially differed from that of their opponents.

in this instance the force of truth, that no material difference is observable in the judgement, which has been passed upon the character of our Saviour by his friends and his foes: at least by so many of the latter, that it appears totally unnecessary to enter at large into the reasons, why that character is entitled to the genuine approbation of all, who have a moral taste, or a virtuous sentiment. Where parties, differing so widely in the general question at issue, yet agree so cordially in a particular instance; we must either conclude that the case excepted is immaterial to the event of the cause, or that the force of truth is there too strong to render it possible to be controverted. The testimony given in favour of Jesus by professed unbelievers is too opposite to their wishes, and too prejudicial to their efforts, to have originated in any thing but the strength of evidence. They, who can trace in the Gospel any marks of fraud or error, cannot be blinded by any prejudice for the reputation of it's author, or entertain any prepossession for the veracity of his historians. In these concurring statements at least we may presume to expect genuine, unsophisticated truth.

It seems unnecessary to notice, on this occasion, the early adversaries of the Gospel, any further than to observe, that the conduct of our Lord, as recorded by the sacred writers, stands uncontradicted by any fact * whatsoever: so that the marks of imposture or enthusiasm, if any such there be, must be discovered in the books of the New Testament; where circumstances are related with so little disguise, as to give the writers at least the appearance of intending to record nothing, but what really happened. The cavils and the insinuations, as well as the concessions, of these antient and determined antagonists, I omit, because they are fully collected in other books †: and because

* The assertions of those Jews, who were contemporaries with our Lord, that he wrought his miracles by the aid of Satan; and of those in after ages, that he had learned magic in Egypt, and that he had stolen a secret name out of the temple, &c. scarcely deserve notice, except to shew, how completely unavailing every attempt to fulfil the reputation of Jesus must prove; when those, who had the fittest opportunity, and the most eager desire, to impeach it, could find nothing to their purpose, but such idle and improbable fictions. Indeed these charges rather confirm, than contradict, the facts related by the Evangelists. See Newcome, pp. 488. and 494.

† In addition to the collections of Sharpe and Lardner, Abp. Newcome has devoted a chapter to "the testimony which has been borne to our Lord's character by his enemies." p. 486. See an additional testimony to the same effect from Origen in p. 378.

because their successors in modern times have not only had recourse to them for every engine of annoyance, but have even collected new materials for the attack from the stores of their own zeal and ingenuity. If any fact, or semblance of fact, had been ever discovered to detract from the character of Jesus, these unwearied enemies would not have neglected to employ it. If there had been any pretence for impeaching the accuracy of the historians, or for derogating from the merits of their Master, we may be assured, they would not have made the concessions they have done. As then it is my anxious wish to supply an antidote against the effects of modern scepticism, my citations will be taken from some of the writers, who may fairly be considered as exerting themselves most zealously, to collect the facts and arguments in defence of their favourite hypothesis.

FOR the first of my vouchers to the purity of the motives, by which the conduct of the Author of Christianity was actuated, I am indebted to the indefatigable Prideaux. “Vaninus (says he) one of the most zealous champions of impiety, that ever appeared against the Christian cause (for he died a martyr for it) hath not attempted

tempted to find, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, any thing that favours of wordly interest. But after the most accurate and diligent search, which so keen an adversary could make, he was forced to give up the point; and plainly acknowledge that, in the whole series of the history and actions of our Saviour, he could not find any thing that he could charge with secular interest or design, to blast him or his religion with *."

THE next authority that I shall quote is that of Mr. Chubb †, who expresses himself concerning our Saviour in the following terms. "In Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a becoming modesty and sobriety: just and honest, upright and sincere; and, above all, of a gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man; in whose mouth was no guile; who went about doing good, not only by his preaching and ministry, but also in curing all manner of diseases among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature, when in it's native purity and

* Letter to the Deists, p. 134.

† True Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sect. 8. pp. 55, 6. This is cited both by Law and Newcome.

and simplicity; and shewed at once what excellent creatures men would be, when under the influence and power of that Gospel he preached unto them."

THE nature and tendency of the doctrines, taught by Christ, are represented in their true light very frequently by Lord Bolingbroke: and certainly they are such, as could not have been invented, or inculcated, by any other than a really good man. He allows, that "the Gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity." He mentions "Christ's blaming his disciples for being willing to call fire from heaven against the Samaritans: and that the miracles wrought by him in the mild and beneficent spirit of Christianity, tended to the good of mankind*."

Rousseau has commented with great force of expression, and great justness of observation, upon the marks of truth, which appear so conspicuously in the writings of the Evangelists, and in the character of their Lord. He has entered minutely into

* Leland's View of Deistical Writers. Let. xxxi. Vol. II.
P. 177.

into a comparison of Jesus with Socrates, and justly argues, that the former was more deserving of the praise of goodness and of wisdom, than the latter—"Yes: (he concludes) if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God. Shall we say, that the history of the Gospel is invented at pleasure? My friend, it is not thus that men invent; and the actions of Socrates, concerning which no one doubts, are less attested than those of Jesus Christ. After all, this is shifting the difficulty, instead of solving it: for it would be more inconceivable, that a number of men should forge this book in concert, than that one should furnish the subject of it. Jewish authors would never have devised such a manner, and such morality; and the Gospel has characters of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would be still more astonishing than its hero*."

EVEN Voltaire, Voltaire so distinguished for his avowed enmity to the name of Jesus Christ, in order to account for the success

* See the whole of this incomparable passage, Emile, Vol. II. p. 85. 1762. See also Newcome, p. 496. from whose translation my quotation is taken.

succes of the Gospel from human causes, is compelled to acknowledge, that his doctrine was pure, and his virtues conspicuous. "If," says he, "Jesus preached a pure morality; if he announced the approach of a kingdom of Heaven, for the recompence of the just; if he had disciples attached to his person and his virtues; if these very virtues drew on him the persecutions of the priests; if calumny caused him to die an ignominious death; his doctrine, preached with firmness by his disciples, must have produced a very considerable effect upon the world*."

MR. Paine, who is exceeded by no infidel writer, in want of decency and candour, and who certainly is not deterred by any scruple whatsoever from uttering any thing, however scandalous or offensive, against the cause he opposes, yet in one part of his *Age of Reason*, professes his "respect for the moral character of Christ;" and in another place, thus expresses his opinion concerning him. "Jesus Christ founded

* Dictionnaire Philosoph. Christianisme. Œuvres, Tom. xxxviii. p. 499. Basle 1786. He enters much more fully into the character of Jesus, whom he pronounces infinitely superior to Socrates; *Traité sur la Tolérance*, Tom. xxx. p. 152, &c.

founded no new system. He called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy *.”

MR. Gibbon, whose zeal in the cause of infidelity was certainly not inferior to that of Mr. Paine, though he has managed it with more address, and indeed with more decency, yet has borne testimony in favour of “Jesus of Nazareth,” by recording “his mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character †.”

MR. Lequinio’s attestation, in favour of the virtues of our Saviour, is so full and extraordinary, that I cannot better conclude this series of evidence than in his words. He represents Christ as the wisest and best man that ever lived, “one who was actuated by the most sincere good will to all the human race, teaching the great principles of moral equity, and the purest patriotism; braving all dangers, opposing the great, despising alike glory and fortune, equally temperate with respect to himself, beneficent

* Age of Reason, part 1st, pp. 21, 59.

† Vol. I. p. 526 4to.

beneficent to others, and sympathizing with all ; hated by the powerful, whom he provoked ; persecuted by the intriguing, whose artifices he exposed ; and put to death by a blind and deceived multitude, for whom he had always lived. This generous philanthropist, "he says," who wholly sacrificed himself to the publick good, who gave his whole existence to the unhappy, and even to his persecutors, never lied but to teach virtue*."

UPON a diligent survey of the character of Jesus Christ, I confess myself unable to discern a single action which seems to be, by any obliquity of construction, unfavourable to virtue. Indeed, the marks of goodness are so plainly stamped upon his character, that, as we have seen, it is pronounced unexceptionable by the most violent of those, who have opposed his claims as a person divinely inspired. No one therefore, without doing the utmost violence to candour and truth, can deny him to have been endued with more than ordinary virtue. It becomes then a question between the advocates and the adversaries of Christianity,

* *Prejugés Detruits*, p. 286. quoted by Dr. Priestley, in his Letters to the French Philosophers, p. 33.

tianity, whether it be not in the highest degree contrary to probability, that a person of eminent virtue could have contrived and executed such a scheme of imposture, as must be laid to the charge of Jesus, if his pretensions be not admitted? In order to resolve this question, it is evidently necessary to consider, in what light this imposture ought to be viewed. Whether it can justly be considered as a sort of pious fraud, where the motives may seem to palliate the design; or whether, if it be a fraud, it be not attended with very gross and aggravating circumstances, and justly deserving to be stigmatized as involving in itself peculiar baseness.

JESUS CHRIST, according to the hypothesis of our adversaries, must have had it in contemplation to take advantage of the popular belief respecting the arrival of some great prophet among the Jews, and have made it subservient to his own views of setting up as the teacher of a new religion, superior to that of Moses. The ceremonial law he proposed to abolish, as well as to confound the distinction which had hitherto prevailed between the Jews and Gentiles; all of whom it was his plan to incor-

incorporate into one mass, acknowledging his authority, and professing obedience to his injunctions. To effect these ends, he asserted that he was commissioned immediately from Heaven, being himself the Son of God; that he was invested with full authority to promulgate a new law, and to establish a new covenant between the Creator of the universe and his creatures.

THIS is the scheme, which is so openly and constantly imputed to a Jew, and a man of acknowledged virtue. It is therefore necessary to examine minutely what this charge implies.

SURELY it implies that Jesus, from considerations of interest or vanity, undertook to overturn a religious institution, which had subsisted for ages; which, from its earliest date, was regarded by all his countrymen as having proceeded from God; and over which they universally believed that the Deity watched with peculiar care and jealousy. It is more than probable, upon any supposition, that Jesus himself entertained the same belief of the divine origin, and sacred obligation, of the law of Moses, as his countrymen: since it is not easy to conceive how any Jew, disbelieving it's

it's divine authority, should submit to it's burthensome rites and ceremonies, and encounter the contempt of the rest of the world. Besides, the Jews never were a thinking and speculative people; nor are any marks of a disbelief or rejection of the Mosaic law, founded upon an investigation of it's pretensions, and a consequent conviction of their fallacy, to be traced in any period of their history prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. They have frequently deviated, from the rites instituted in honour of Jehovah, into the practice of superstitious and idolatrous observances; but this undoubtedly arose more from practical, than speculative principles: they have been divided into schisms; and, after the captivity, they are supposed to have incorporated, into their system of religious opinions, some notions of the Chaldee sages, and the Greek philosophers. But it deserves to be remarked, that, in no period of their history, did they adhere more strictly to the letter of the Mosaic ritual; at no time did they guard more anxiously against every neglect or infringement of it's authority; than in the interval between their return from captivity, and the final destruction of their city.

Apostates from the religion of Moses undoubtedly there have been some*; but these most generally of so infamous a character, that an accurate and candid historian takes occasion to remark (as a singular circumstance) of a person of this description, that he was not distinguished by any bad qualities †. A speculative unbeliever seems to be a phænomenon unknown in their history ‡.

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* Gibbon's assumption upon this point is certainly gratuitous; and must be considered as one of the fallies, in which he loved to indulge himself against all revealed religion, rather than as deserving the attention due to an historic document. "It seems probable," he says, "that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of Apostates." Vol. I. p. 452. 4to.

† On leur donna en suite un apostat pour gouverner: c' étoit Alexandre, Neveu de Philon Juif, qui avoit sacrifié sa Religion à ses Intérêts; mais, il ne fut pas méchant, contre la coutume. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, Liv. I. c. 17. sect. 5.

See an account of one who acted up to the general character, c. 19. sect. 5.—It is important to observe, that many of those Jews, who have abjured the religion of their fore-fathers, from some principle of interest or fear, have afterwards shewn that they acted against their own conviction, by returning to it at a time when their sincerity could not well be questioned. See a remarkable instance of this in the story of a Bohemian Jew, named Chagim, or Joachim, told by Wagenseil, *Tela ignea Satanae*, p. 188, &c. I am sorry to remark, that the description of the tortures, sustained by this wretched Jew, is given with far too much complacency. The same author mentions another Jew, Julius Cunradus Otto, qui à Judaicis fordibus per baptismum repurgatus, paulò post ad vetus voluntabrum rediit, p. 119. For other instances of similar conversions, see Mod. Univ. Hist. Vol. XI. pp. 7, &c.

‡ I must own, I conceived this representation to be accurate, when I wrote it. But I have since found, that I must correct

IT is not therefore to be taken for granted, hastily and without proof, that Jesus disputed the authority of the Mosaic law, and on that account had less scruple in introducing a form of religion, which he thought preferable to it. On the other hand to say, that, being himself a believer in the law of Moses, he nevertheless attempted to supersede it by one of his own contriving, is to assert that, which is highly inconsistent with the character of a man of sense and of virtue. For it cannot by any means be thought credible, that a good man* should embark in an undertaking, whose drift and design were to overturn a religion,

correct it. Mr. Collins, it seems, discovered some time since, that the Prophets under the law "were great free-thinkers," and that "they writ with as great liberty against the established religion of the Jews (which the people looked on as the institution of God himself) as if they looked upon it all to be imposture." Leland's View of Deistical writers, Vol. I. p. 97.

Much as the 18th century has to boast in regard to new discoveries, there is nothing surely which can exceed this, either in novelty or ingenuity.

* Prideaux's second mark of imposture is, "that it can have none, but wicked men, for the authors of it." Letter to the Deists, p. 152. He afterwards considers the authors of such imposture, under the several classes of Atheists, Deists, and believers of an instituted religion: and he shews that, under either of these descriptions, they could not act from a good motive, nor consequently be worthy the character of good men, p. 178.

religion, which he himself believed to be of divine authority.

AMONG the qualities, by which Jesus is so peculiarly distinguished, there is none which more attracts our observation and commands our applause, than a vigorous and fervent spirit of piety*, an entire resignation to the will of God, an implicit submission to his pleasure. Nor is there any principle, which he inculcates more earnestly and more frequently upon his disciples, than the necessity and propriety of having recourse to God in prayer, of absolute dependance upon him, of the most ardent love and filial awe toward him, of the most anxious and incessant endeavour to obey his will, and to promote his glory. The Being, whom he thus professed to honour, and whom he enjoined his followers to adore, was undoubtedly the Jehovah of Israel, the source to which Moses referred his authority, the founder of the civil and religious polity established among the Jews. To suppose that Jesus assumed a fictitious commission, and forged imaginary credentials, from this supreme Being; that he poured forth his soul in prayer to him, whose

* Vid. Newcome, p. 341, &c. Law, p. 288. note.

whose name he was daily prostituting to his own vain or selfish purposes ; that he continually exhorted his followers to reverence and obey him, whom he himself was dishonouring by a system of fraud ; that he acknowledged him as the Almighty Author of a dispensation, which he himself was endeavouring to abrogate ; the omniscient framer of laws, for which he intended to substitute the fruits of his own invention ; this surely is to suppose him guilty of the blackest hypocrisy, as well as impiety. Yet this charge is plainly implied against the reputation of the blessed Jesus by those, who contend that he was engaged in a scheme of Imposture. This charge, however, as well as all the others, which tend to impeach the integrity of his principles, or the purity of his motives, is directly contradicted by the whole tenour of his life ; of a life spent in the exercise of his duties to God and man ; of a life which, according to the concessions of the very men who urge the charge, itself repels and confutes it.

SUPPOSING, however, for the sake of argument, that he did not admit the authority of the Mosaic law ; the mere charge of imposture presumes him to be guilty of a dis-

a disingenuousness and artifice, inconsistent surely with “the sublime simplicity of his actions and character*.” Upon various occasions he appeals to the authority of Moses, as if he firmly believed his divine legation; and his frequent assertions, that he was acting under the immediate direction and express will of the Supreme Being, plainly convict him of repeated and flagrant falsehoods, upon the infidel hypothesis. Is it credible that any one, entitled to the appellation of good, would in this solemn manner have borne witness to an untruth; especially when the utterance of that untruth was the specific cause of his condemnation to a painful and ignominious death? After solemnly assuring the Roman governour that he was a King, that the pretensions he had assumed were real, he adds in the most emphatic manner: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth†.” Besides, in supporting a complicated and difficult imposture for so long a time, he must have had recourse to such a variety of shifts and evasions, and must have

* Gibbon, Vid. sup. pag. 253.

† John xviii. 37.

have so habituated himself to the practice of fraud, as to destroy the tone of his virtuous feelings: and the difficulty of sustaining an assumed character, in so public a manner, must have been such, as at length to render some deviation from the truth too palpable to escape detection. Such certainly was the case with the prophet of Arabia, whose specious professions, and hypocritical demeanour for some time comported with the gravity of the character he assumed: but when he was emboldened by success, he gave a loose to his passions, and indulged himself in all the gratifications, which power could supply to his lust and his ambition *. The mildness which he at first displayed, and the tolerance which, as he was compelled to claim, he was necessitated to preach, gave way to edicts and to practices of the most sanguinary nature †: and the numerous contradictions, which, in spite of all his art, are palpably conspicuous in the Koran, are poorly glossed over by the convenient

* Bampton Lectures, p. 194, &c. Sale's Prel. Disc. p. 137. Prideaux, Life of Mahomet, pp. 82, 87, 115, &c.

† Bampton Lect. p. 190. Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 222. 4to. and the note, where he says very acutely, "This character alone may generally decide the doubts of the learned, whether a chapter was revealed at Mecca or Medina."

convenient doctrine of abrogation*. Nothing, however, of this kind, whether of inconsistency in conduct, or contradiction in doctrine, can be fairly alleged against our blessed Lord.

I AM willing to believe, that many of those, who, without any reluctance, impute a fraudulent intention to the founder of our religion, are not sufficiently aware of the extent, or enormity, of the moral turpitude, which the imputation involves. How far they are justified in urging this charge, without previously considering it's precise import, becomes to them a question of deep and awful responsibility. Certain however it is, that unbelievers in general, without any scruple or hesitation, place our Saviour, as well as Moses, in the same class with Numa, and with Mahomet, and with all those, who have endeavoured to introduce their own institutions among mankind, under the pretence of divine authority. Now the distinction, necessary to be made in these cases, is, that Jesus was unquestionably possessed of more virtue than any of the impostors, among whom he has been so presumpt-

* Sale's Prel. Disc. p. 66. Bampf. Lect. p. 359. and Jortin's Discourses concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 142. not.

presumptuously and indiscriminately ranked; and that the scheme of imposture, attributed to him, necessarily implies a greater deviation from rectitude, a greater absence of moral principle, than that which is imputed to any of the others. If these two positions can be fairly and fully made out, as I trust they will be, they will go very far towards establishing the Christian religion.

WITH respect to the superiority of moral worth, I shall argue upon the broad basis of historical truth, that there is no character upon record, particularly of those, who have attempted, or effected, any great change in the opinions of mankind, which appears so virtuous as that of Jesus Christ. This has been repeatedly proved by the friends of Christianity, and it has been allowed by it's enemies, upon a comparison with the very best of the Heathen philosophers, Socrates*: and if Socrates falls so short in an estimate of moral worth, even in the judgement of unbelievers, the first position will, I think, readily be allowed. Our conviction in this case will be strengthened,

* Law, p. 331. Bamp. Lect. p. 212. See also Rousseau and Voltaire, ubi sup.

ened, if we consider that, notwithstanding the brevity of the Evangelical histories, there never was exhibited such a minute delineation of character as those authors have represented. He is placed before us in every possible variety of situation, in every emergency, on great, as well as less important, occasions ; the very avenues of the heart are, as it were, laid open ; the motives of action, as well as the course of conduct, are circumstantially related.

IT was the remark of a great judge of life, that the most celebrated and distinguished characters never appeared so estimable to those, who had an opportunity of approaching them more nearly, and of observing them more narrowly * ; when the caution, induced by the presence of spectators, was removed, and the exertion, occasioned by the desire of gaining applause, no longer continued. Such a close and frequent inspection of the human conduct serves, like the power of an optical glass, to discover that which is latent, to enlarge that which is minute, to deform that which is beautiful. If however we apply the observation, which is so generally true of human

* Personne n'est un heros pour son valet de chambre.

human nature, to the narratives which contain the actions of Jesus, his character, even when subjected to this close inspection, shews a lustre equally unbroken, and a beauty equally regular. Admitted to all the familiarity of social intercourse, partners of his retirement, and witnesses of his most trying hours, the Apostles relate every incident without disguise; and from them we have a series of facts, clearly illustrating the habits, and completely developing the character, of their friend and Master. Yet, amidst all this variety of situation and accuracy of detail, the only impressions, left upon the mind of an unprejudiced reader, are those of affection and of veneration for the transcendental virtues of Jesus Christ.—Besides this, we are always to bear in mind, that the very manner, in which these accounts are given, excludes the idea, that the character thus delineated was invented by the writers; or that they were possessed of the arts of selecting, embellishing, or suppressing certain facts, for the sake of composing an elaborate panegyric. The way, in which these histories are put together, evidently shews, not only that the authors were incapable of setting off any

subject by the arts of composition, but that they were careless of literary fame. If the memoirs of Socrates by Xenophon, the eulogium upon Agesilaus by the same writer, the panegyric oration and that upon Evagoras by Isocrates, or any of the writings, by which the later and degenerate Romans complimented their emperors, be minutely examined; the narratives of the sacred historians will doubtless sink in literary merit, but they will rise considerably in that, which is much more important, the merit of recording truth. The former evidently shew a desire of displaying their own abilities, as well as of gratifying the objects, upon whom this labour of intellect was bestowed; the others have nothing so conspicuous, as the wish of describing accurately real transactions. And hence their testimony in favour of Jesus is more justly to be valued, and regarded as undeniably true. Let these circumstances be shewn to apply with the same, or nearly the same, propriety of adaptation to any human character, especially to those, with whom it is our object now to compare the blessed Jesus. Let it be shewn, that their characters have been as minutely and as faithfully described, and that their enemies



enemies have been unable to fix the smallest stain upon them; particularly let it be shewn of the artful and wary impostor of Arabia.

NOTWITHSTANDING, I contend that all, who at any time have endeavoured to impose upon the credulity of mankind by their own inventions, under the assumed sanction of Heaven, are far less culpable, far less chargeable with moral imperfection (so far as their respective schemes of imposture are concerned) than Jesus of Nazareth would have been, if he had preached to his countrymen "a cunningly devised fable."

THE Heathen legislators* had no divine authority to supersede, had no well established institutions to overthrow; and by alleging the authority of their gods in favour of their designs, they made use of an instrument, which it was compatible with the policy and suited to the genius of the times to adopt†. As they had no

better

* Vid. Polyæn. Strategem. Lib. VIII. c. 4. And Valer. Max. Lib. I. c. 2. Prideaux has treated this topic upon somewhat different grounds, Letter &c. p. 174. See also Shuckford's Connection, Vol. III. p. 368.

† To confirm and illustrate this assertion, I must beg leave to quote a passage from a learned author, which did not fall into my hands, till after this chapter was written.—"It is observed by divers antiquits, but more largely insisted upon by Plutarch

better means of impressing upon the popular mind what they thought of importance to the general interest, they availed themselves of a support, which the ignorance and temper of mankind, in that state of society, seemed to make allowable, and, it should seem, indispensable. We may also remark, that the very nature of polytheism renders an appeal to one of its numerous divinities less

Plutarch* than any other that I know, that for divers ages before Socrates, the natural temper of men was somewhat ecstaticall; in their actions most of them tumid and high; in their expressions very poetical and allegorical; in all things very apt to be led by phansy and external appearances, very devout in their kind but rather superstitious: in most things that they did, more guided by certain sudden instincts and raptures, than by reason; not out of any contempt of it, but because they had it not. In those dayes there was no moral philosophy: and they were accounted worthy of highest honours, that could utter most sentences that had somewhat of reason in them; which by other men were generally received as oracles, because they seemed to surpasre the wisdom of ordinary men.

There were as many religions almost as men; for every man's religion was his phansy; and they had most credit and authority, that could best invent, and make best shew. Among so many religions there were no controversies, but very good agreement and concord; but no reason used either to examine, or to disprove. There was no talk among men, but of dreams, revelations and apparitions: and they that could so easily phansy God in whatsoever they did phansy, had no reason to mistrust or to question the relations of others, though never so strange, which were so agreeable to their own humours and dispositions; and by which themselves were confirmed in their own supposed enthusiasms."

Casaubon on Enthusiasm, 12mo. London, 1656. p. 5. See also pp. 4, 174.

* Περὶ τῆς μηχανῆς, &c. alibique.

less presumptuous and less criminal, than where the one invisible God, the only proper object of adoration, is called upon to sanction the opinions, or promote the interests, of fallible man. Polytheism, by dividing and subdividing the essence and attributes of the Divine nature, not only separates that which ought to be entirely single, but contaminates that which ought to be most pure. As these ideal gods approached nearer in moral qualities to the imperfection of human beings, and were supposed to have local attachments and local interests, their interposition in human affairs appeared more probable, as well as more necessary; and therefore the pretence of it was assumed with scruple, as well as less guilt. Most certain it is, that the objects of Heathen worship are represented as interposing so continually in the conduct and concerns of mortals, in the serious compositions of tragic writers, and in the almost consecrated works of their great mythological poet, that we may argue from this circumstance, in the light both of cause and effect, to prove that a belief of their real interference prevailed very generally, and therefore was very generally employed. The fictions of Numa then and

Lycurgus

Lycurgus may be considered, if not quite excusable, yet as palliated by the peculiar circumstances, in which they were placed—and if Mahomet had not rendered his religion subservient to a scheme of slaughter and conquest, he might have been viewed in a light not much more unfavourable. Yet even for Mahomet some allowance may be reasonably claimed. In a country, where idolatry prevailed, the endeavour to introduce a purer conception of the Divinity was not wholly unworthy of praise. It is true that Christianity had existed in the world for some centuries before his birth: yet a barbarian of Arabia might be supposed not to be well instructed in its value. He might not have had sufficient opportunities of comprehending its real nature and excellence: and indeed it appears extremely probable, that his knowledge of Christian history, at whatever time he gained it, was chiefly derived from Apocryphal * books; which were not likely to afford much satisfaction, or to infuse much conviction into any mind. Besides, the genuine doctrines of our religion were

* Mr. Jones, in his valuable work upon the Canon, before referred to, has shewn that this really was the case. Appendix to Vol. I. p. 451. last Edit. See also Dr. White's *Bampton Lect.* p. 358. and note.

were at that period of time so much obscured, and the practice of it's professors so much vitiated *, that if he judged of it's truth and it's usefulness merely from what he saw and heard, the moral guilt of superseding a divine institution will be somewhat extenuated. Hence the faithful followers of Christ, though they unravel the wily designs of Mahomet, will abate of their inflexible rigour against him, while they see so much to lament and to condemn in the conduct of their fellow Christians. Such believers, however impartial, will not indeed justify or defend the scheme of Proselytism, which Mahomet followed up by the sword ; yet they will suggest that a robber † by habit, and an idolater by education, may seem entitled to some portion of the excuse, which is so lavishly indulged to those, who, without the pretence of religion, have laid the world in ruins to gratify their pride and their ambition ‡.

NONE

* See Bampton Lect. pp. 60—73.

† The first attempts which Mahomet made, after his flight to Medina, were to plunder the caravans of Mecca. Prideaux, p. 71.

‡ The applause of mankind must surely seem to be conferred with little discrimination, and therefore to possess but little intrinsic value, when actions, nearly the same, and originating

NONE of these palliations will apply to such a scheme of imposture, as must be imputed to our blessed Lord by his rash or malignant adversaries. The dispensation which the Gospel subverted, had subsisted for fourteen hundred years; was believed by an whole nation to be of divine authority and, however abused by Jewish sectaries, was unquestionably the best form of religion and of civil polity, then existing in the world. If Jesus overturned this merely to establish a code of his own fabrication, he cannot escape the charge of wanton impiety. If we add too the fixed conviction* of the Jews, that their national prosperity and happiness depended upon their adherence to the commands of Jehovah, as delivered by Moses, there appears a degree of rashness and cruelty, in thus destroying the palladium of the Jewish state, from which, on the infidel hypothesis, the character of Jesus cannot be exempted. Nor can he be regarded as more excusable in the means

originating in similar motives, have crowned Alexander and Constantine with the appellation of Great, while the names of Mahomet and of Julian are never uttered without the addition of Impostor and Apostle.

* This was not an hasty opinion, taken up from conjecture, or resting merely upon tradition, but founded upon the express declarations of the law. See Deut. xxviii. and xxx.

means he adopted, than in the ends he pursued, if the religion he established had no other warrant for it's excellence or permanence, than the sagacity of his own views, or the comprehension of his own intellect. The holy and venerable name of the Lord of heaven and earth was the cloak, upon this supposition, assumed as a cover to his fictions: and the intimate union and connection in which he boasted of standing related to the Deity, could only be an additional and unnecessary outrage against the divine Majesty. To destroy the institutions of this august and incomprehensible Being, under the pretence of shewing him greater reverence; to do away the peculiar rites with which He had signified his command that his people should honour him, under the fictitious assumption of authority from that very Being; especially when we consider the profound and unparalleled reverence entertained by all the Jews for that holy name, and those sacred institutions; would have been a procedure at once so unaccountable and so desperate, that it could scarcely be imputed to any man, however audacious and however resolute in the prosecution of his purposes;—far less could

it be imputed to the meek and unassuming, the spotless and irreproachable Jesus.

FROM these suppositions, groundless as every candid reader must surely be persuaded they are, let us turn to the more pleasing task of contemplating the character of our blessed Lord, as it is drawn in the pages of his faithful historians. A profound reverence for the sacred obligation of the Mosaic law, and the most ardent devotion to its Almighty Author; an inflexible attachment to truth, a rooted detestation of hypocrisy and fraud, especially when concealed under the semblance of religion; a genuine love of that which is right and good, and the incessant practice of the most exalted charity, are conspicuously marked in his conduct; the same amiable features adorn the tenour of his precepts; in teaching and in practising every species of virtue he lived, and in the cause of truth and benevolence he died. Is it possible such a character as this, could have been concerned in such a scheme of cunning, hypocrisy, and impiety?

IF it be contended, that Jesus acted only with a view of clearing the Mosaic law from the superstitions with which it was clogged, and the traditions with which it was

was nearly overwhelmed, we may reply, that the assumption of such false credentials cannot be made to agree with the honest, undissimbling virtues of Jesus—and that he plainly went farther than this supposition imagines, by introducing a system, which virtually abrogated the whole ceremonial law, has, I trust, been already proved*. If the doctrines of the Apostles accurately coincided with the views of their Master, and if they cannot be fairly charged with deviating from or altering the plan, upon which he acted, this objection at once falls to the ground. So that, if Jesus be considered as entertaining the same opinion with the rest of his countrymen concerning the origin of the law, the charge of fabricating the Gospel will necessarily involve such an absence of moral principle, as is clearly incompatible with facts, which the most virulent of his adversaries have acknowledged to be true.

I HAVE already considered the hypothesis, that Jesus might have been an unbeliever in the divine legation of Moses; and I have endeavoured to shew, that even, upon this hypothesis, improbable and absurd as it is,

his

* Chapter V.

his conduct would be completely at variance with his general allowed good character. It seems therefore only necessary to notice that one remaining refuge of our opponents; the supposition of his acting from certain good motives, which it is next to impossible to define or even to conjecture; motives, which our adversaries have contented themselves with asserting, while they have always omitted to explain how they can possibly be made consistent with his general conduct, and indeed how they can be applicable to the particular instance where these motives are supposed to have operated. Mr. Lequinio has expressed this capital argument very concisely, and indeed as clearly as the idea appears capable of being conveyed. He asserts, that "Jesus lied only in the cause of truth." The futility of this imagination is so well exposed by a late writer, that I must beg leave to transcribe his words.

"Was ever a character in romance more unlike any thing in nature than this? And yet this was an ordinary Jewish carpenter, who had no advantage of education, or knowledge of the world. This man, Mr. Lequinio supposes, without any thing supernatural

natural about him, to have acquired this most extraordinary super-human disposition, a generosity and magnanimity exceeding that of all the heroes and philosophers of antiquity, to have converted thousands of his countrymen to the belief not only of his being a prophet, or a man inspired of God, but even the Messiah, whom before this they had universally expected would be a King and a conqueror, and that, after dying in the most public manner, he rose from the dead, as he declared beforehand he should do, in confirmation of his divine mission.

"If a person of so excellent a moral character could be a mere impostor; if a man with so few natural advantages could deceive so many of his countrymen, all previously disposed to reject his claim, and enable them to deceive so many more of all nations, we must say that nature, neither before nor since that time, ever produced such men to deceive or to be deceived*."

THERE are many other considerations, which render such a solution of the difficulties, attending the origin of Christianity, much more hard to be admitted, than any difficulty,

* Letters to the French philosophers, ubi sup.

difficulty, which it is intended to remove. A good man, and a man of sense, which Jesus is by all parties allowed to have been, before he embarked in such a scheme, would undoubtedly look a little to the probability of it's success: and from the state of the Jewish minds, little else was to be expected, but the destruction of the contriver. He would also take into consideration the probable mischief, as well as the probable good. The unsettling of the faith of an whole nation, the extirpation of their ancient institutions, he must know, could not be accomplished without much ill will, without producing feuds and factions, and their necessary consequence, bloodshed; particularly in a nation, so easily agitated, and so furious in it's passions*, as that, to which this unpopular scheme of reformation was addressed. Of this indeed Jesus plainly intimated that he was fully aware, when he warned his followers of the sufferings they must needs undergo for disseminating his doctrines—when he pointed out the unhappy divisions, which would take place in the bosom of families, in consequence of the system he was establishing—and when, in the most unequi-

* Josephus, passim.

unequivocal terms, he avowed, “ Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I am not come to send peace, but a sword*.” He goes farther than this; he not only anticipates the evils arising from the propagation of his doctrines, but seems to express, what upon the hypothesis of our adversaries might be called, a criminal unconcern, how soon they should take place. “ I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled†?” A good man would not venture upon a scheme, which he saw was to produce so much actual misery; nor would a man of sense so openly profess to his converts his knowledge of these effects; without looking much further into future consequences, than a mere man can be supposed to do. Unless therefore we allow Jesus the character of a prophet, that is, unless we admit the truth of his pretensions, we must accuse him both of rashness and cruelty for hazarding so much actual evil for the sake of possible eventual good; and we must confess that his conduct is utterly inexplicable, in placing before those, whom

* Vid. Matt. x. vv. 17—26. 34, &c. xxiv. 9, 10.

† Luke xii. 49, &c.

whom he wished to gain over to his party, such an unfavourable representation of the tendency and effects of his new institution. The whole tenour of his character, which displayed the most consummate prudence, as well as the most tender sympathy for the sorrows and miseries of man, forbids us to assign the least degree of probability to the supposition, against which we are contending.

THERE are besides several other difficulties springing out of the hypothesis—Why, for instance, if good were the object for which our Lord contrived his plan, should he assume such high and extraordinary pretensions, as, combined with his appearance, could serve only to disgust the minds, and shock the prejudices, of his countrymen? Why should he at the same time seem even to court that appearance of poverty and humiliation, equally in contradiction to *his own* pretensions, and to *their* expectations? Why, if he embarked in the fraud from such a motive, should he pursue a course of conduct, which would infallibly expose him in a short time to the envy and cruelty of the rulers, and quickly abridge his means of doing any more good? To what purpose, in fine, were those

those repeated declarations of his own death, and his predictions of rising again? Why were that death and that resurrection, not merely stated as events that were to happen, but incorporated into the whole scheme of his religion? Are these only to be considered as the fictions of his followers, when the cause began to prevail after his death?—If so, let the writings be proved forgeries, or let the writers be convicted of falsehood! But till either the one or the other of these attempts be made with some success, we may consistently argue from them as facts, supported by such a body of evidence, that those who most wish to disprove, are constrained in a great measure to allow them.

WITH whatsoever speciousness therefore the charge of error or of fraud may appear to be directed against Christianity, it will, upon due examination, be found to impute such a want of candour, of integrity and piety, such a dereliction of moral principle, to the author of the supposed imposture, as cannot, with any shew of fairness or probability, be laid to the charge of any man really good. Even in the acknowledgment of his enemies, the character of Jesus exceeds the usual measure of human

excellence; consequently, by their confession, the accusation, which is levelled against his religion, is wholly inapplicable.

So great is the inconsistency, to which the imputation of fraud against the founder of our religion exposes those who urge it; and it is well worth their consideration, whether similar repugnancies to moral probability do not exist in every objection, which strikes at the divine origin of the Gospel.—For my own part, I cannot but express my most anxious wish, that every such objector would maturely weigh the whole extent to which his arguments lead, the difficulties with which they are embarrassed, and the contradictions in which they are involved. I am satisfied that, after a full and impartial enquiry, the violations of credibility, necessarily arising out of any infidel ground of objection, will be generally acknowledged to be much more numerous, glaring, and offensive, than those which the most captious antagonist can represent, as necessarily arising out of a belief in the Gospel history.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GODWIN'S MISREPRESENTATIONS OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE
CHARACTER OF IT'S FOUNDER EXA-
MINED,

Passage from Mr. Godwin's Enquirer quoted.—The charges, contained in it, reduced to three heads.—1. That bigotry and intolerance are encouraged by the Christian religion.—2. That an improper stress is laid upon faith.—3. That there are certain moral defects in the character and temper of Jesus Christ.—Each of these charges examined separately—and confuted, partly by historical documents—partly by a critical inquiry into the texts, Mark xvi. 16. Matth. xxiii. 33.—This writer shewn to have misunderstood or perverted them.—A fair deduction made, from the subjects of the preceding inquiry, in favour of Christianity.

A MONGST the few, whose moral feelings have been so little in unison with those of the rest of mankind, as to lead them to impeach the character of our blessed Saviour, is Mr. Wm. Godwin. In his publication called “The Enquirer,” the following

following very remarkable passage is introduced *.

"**THERE** is nothing perhaps, that has contributed more to the introduction and perpetuating of bigotry in the world, than the doctrines of the Christian religion. It caused the spirit of intolerance to strike a deep root, and it has entailed that spirit upon many, who have shaken off the directer influence of it's tenets. It is the characteristic of this religion, to lay the utmost stress upon faith. It's central doctrine is contained in this short maxim, "He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned †." What it is, the belief of which is saving, the records of our religion have left open to controversy; but the fundamental nature of faith, is one of it's most unquestionable lessons.—Faith is not only necessary to preserve us from the pains of hell; it is also requisite, as a qualification for temporal blessings. When any one applied to Jesus to be cured of any disease, he was first of all questioned about the implicitness of his faith; and in Galilee, and other places, Christ wrought

* Pag. 322—3.

† Mark xvi. 16.

wrought not many miracles, because of their unbelief*. Never were curses poured out in a more copious stream, or with a more ardent and unsparing zeal, than by the meek and holy Jesus upon those, who opposed his pretensions†. The short and comprehensive description bestowed upon the refractory to the end of time, appears to be this, “they have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil‡.”

WITHOUT depreciating the general talents of this writer, I may be allowed to lament, that one, who professes to search after truth, should have so widely mistaken the object of his researches: and without deciding upon his motives, I may fairly call in question the accuracy of his statement, and the justness of his conclusions, upon a most important topic—so important indeed, that I make no doubt of obtaining the pardon of my readers, for examining these objections in a separate chapter.

THE substance of the accusations brought by this writer against the Gospel, and it's blessed Author, may be comprized under three heads, viz.

I. THE

* “Matthew viii. 13. ix. 28, 29. xiii. 58. Mark v. 36. ix. 23. xi. 23, 24. John xi. 40. xx. 29.”

† “Take, as an example, Matthew xxiii. 33.”

‡ “John iii. 19.”

1. THE bigotry and intolerance, sanctioned by the doctrines of the Christian religion.

2. THE improper and unwarrantable stress laid upon faith.

3. CERTAIN moral defects in the character and temper of Jesus.

1. THIS author is so eager to fix the odious charge of bigotry upon the Christian system, that he seems to represent such a spirit as not having been introduced into the world, till this religion arose to discover and to cherish it. It appears then that he is ignorant of the bigotry of the Egyptians; between two of whose tribes an animosity arose, from a difference in religious sentiments, which cannot be characterized in stronger terms, than in those which the satyrift has employed.

*Inter finitimos vetus atque antiqua similitas,
Immortale odium, et nunquam sanabile vulnus
Ardet adhuc *.*

IT may be, that he has forgotten the glowing picture, which the same poet has drawn of the consequences of a bigotry, with which the ingenuity of malevolence itself cannot slander Christianity, as having

the

* Juvenal, Sat. xv. 33. Sec vv. 78, &c.

the most remote connection. It may be, that he has passed slightly over a scene, from the barbarity of which human nature almost recoils—in which however an infidel historian, with perfect consistency, finds only “some obscure traces of an intolerant spirit*.”

If, without the authority of the Areopagus, any one had attempted to introduce the worship of a strange god, the laws of Athens assigned death for his punishment †.

But

* Gibbon; c. ii. not. (3.)

† Joseph. c. Apion. ii. 37. Νόμῳ δ' ἦν τὸ ταρεῖον αὐτοῖς (Αθηναῖοις) κεκωλυμένον, καὶ τιμωρία κατὰ τῶν ξένον εἰσαγόντων. Θεὸν ἀριστονόμοντας.

See Wesseling's note on Petit's Legg. Att. p. 69. Even Mr. Hume has shewn his tenderness to the religions of antiquity, when he says, that “except the banishment of Protagoras, and the death of Socrates, which last event proceeded partly from other motives, there are scarce any instances to be met with in antient history, of this bigoted jealousy, with which the present age is so much infected*.” I readily agree, that other considerations, besides those of religion, actuated the persecutors of Socrates; but if impiety had not been made the pretext, his countrymen would not have put him to death: and this circumstance, it became the candour of Mr. Hume, to point out. I must further observe, that Mr. Hume passes in silence over the case of Anaxagoras, who certainly was compelled to quit his country, because he was accused, or at least suspected, of impiety. Diogenes Laertius is content with telling us ωεὶ τῆς δίκης αὐτῷ διάφορα λέγεσθαι; but the δίκη, to whatever extent it might go, evidently

* Essay on a Particular Providence, and a Future State. Vol. II. p. 149.

But were a similar severity to be employed by any Christian state, it would be imputed not merely to the policy of governours, but to the temper of priests.—The odious bigotry of Antiochus Epiphanes* will not easily escape the recollection of any, but of those who will impute no fault, nor arraign any crime, except it be found to involve in it's consequences the friends of revealed religion.—Had the law which was inscribed in the xii. tables, Peregrinos Deos ne co-lunto,

dently was on account τῆς ἀσεβίας αὐτῷ. According to Plutarch, he was not condemned, nor even regularly accused; but, by the advice of Pericles, he left Athens, for the purpose of avoiding accusation. That advice however was given in consequence of the law, which Diopithes had proposed to the people; (*εἰσαγγέλλεσθαι τὰς τὰς θεῖας μὴ νομίζοντας*) and which alarmed Pericles for the safety of Anaxagoras. Vidend. Plutarch. in Vit. Periclis. See also the whole chapter in Josephus above cited; in which many instances of intolerance amongst the antients, and particularly the Athenians, are stated and commented upon.—Respecting the charge brought against Anaxagoras, consult Mitford's History of Greece, c. xxii. sect. 3. Vol. V. p. 141. 8vo.

* i Maccab. i. 41. I am unwilling to urge the conduct of Cambyses, when he stabbed Apis, and ordered the priests to be scourged, and put the leading men at Memphis to death. See Herodot. B. iii. c. 29. The vexations of Cambyses from his misfortunes probably had produced a phrensy, and that phrensy burst out in acts of violence, where intolerance was plainly mixed with impiety and revenge. It is however impossible to exonerate the Persian Magi, or Xerxes who acted under their direction, from the charge both of intolerance and fanaticism. Nec sequor magos Persarum; quibus auctoribus Xerxes inflammâsse templa Græciae dicitur. Cie. de Legg. lib. ii. s. 10. Edit. Ernesti.

Iunto *, been considered as the edict of a Christian prince, we should probably have heard the loudest complaints against the spirit of bigotry, by which it was dictated: and if the demolition of the temple of Serapis and Isis had been effected by the order of an ecclesiastical synod, instead of an heathen senate, it would doubtless have been styled an atrocious outrage upon the unalienable rights of private judgement, instead of being represented as proceeding from the use of "a common privilege," and ascribed to the "cold and feeble efforts of policy †." But it is particularly remarkable, that a spirit of intolerance should be represented as owing its introduction to Christianity, when the violent means which were adopted for the purpose of crushing this very religion, at the time when its professors are universally acknowledged to have been both inoffensive and unambitious, are too well known to be controverted. The force of historic truth is in this instance too powerful to be suppressed, or evaded: upon this occasion therefore, the Historian, who would

* Separatim nemo habessit Deos; neve novos, sive advenas, nisi publicè adscitos, privatim colunto. Cicer. ibid. sect. 8,

† Gibbon, Vol. I. p. 33. and not. (15.)

would gladly co-operate with any plausible attempt to injure Christianity, must be brought forward to oppose the statement of his zealous co-adjutor in the cause of infidelity.—Mr. Gibbon admits, that “the religious policy of the antient world seems to have assumed a more stern and intolerant character, to oppose the progress of Christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor, distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan, are filled with the most pathetic complaints, that the Christians, who obeyed the dictates, and solicited the liberty, of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government*.”

So far a check is put upon the assertion of Mr. Godwin with respect to the *introduction* of bigotry. But the zeal of the Historian does not allow him to continue long the

* Vol. I. p. 519.

the advocate of the Church, since he immediately seizes the opportunity of making the following observation : "From the time that Christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the Church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adversaries."

STILL however the Historian does not keep pace with the Philosopher. Consistently enough with their different provinces, the former satisfies himself with diligently remarking the facts, which in his opinion disgrace the cause of Christianity, while the latter more boldly aims his attack at it's very principles, and at once endeavours to strip it of all pretence to a divine origin, by declaring that the odious spirit, of which he complains, is countenanced in it's doctrines. Upon this ground also we are ready to meet him ; and here it is obvious to remark, that he has been led into the vulgar error of confounding the principles of the Christian doctrine, with the mistaken notions and corrupt practices of some, who have professed themselves bound to obey that doctrine implicitly. That too many individuals and even parties, styling themselves Christian,

have

have deviated from the spirit of their religion so completely as to encourage bigotry and practice intolerance, is certainly true; but that such doctrines or practices are authorized by Scripture, we are warranted by it's whole tenour in denying. If Mr. Godwin will take the pains to learn or to recollect what the national spirit of the Jews was, and what their inveterate prejudices, before Jesus appeared among them, and will then remark all that *he* did to enlarge their minds and purify their hearts, that his doctrines were those of the most unbounded philanthropy, and his life one uniform scene of benevolence; Mr. G. will blush at the charge he has adduced against the Christian religion, and the character of it's founder. Jesus, who first pronounced a blessing upon the merciful and peace-makers, who inculcated the return of good for evil, who enforced, in the most authoritative and persuasive manner, the virtues of humility, mutual forgiveness and universal good-will, could not preach a religion of bigotry and intolerance. He, who rebuked his disciples, when they would have called down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritans; who himself healed the wound, which had

had been inflicted in his defence by the unseasonable zeal of one of his followers*; he, who taught the rejection of the Jews, and the admission of the Gentiles into the Messiah's kingdom; he, who breathed out a prayer for his murderers, when they were piercing his body with the instruments of torture†; he surely has thus taught the most effectual lesson against every species of bigotry and intolerance. Nor is it merely by the force of his example, and the obvious sense of his precepts, that he fully repels the odious imputation; but the manner, in which his religion was offered to the acceptance of mankind both by himself and by his disciples, abundantly shews how foreign from it's nature is every thing, which partakes of a desire to prevail with any other weapons than those of truth and reason.— Far from requiring assent to assertions destitute of proof, far from expecting conviction without the legitimate means of enforcing it, Jesus supported his claim to the character
he

* Compare Luke xxii. 51. with Matt. xxvi. 52. “Christianity” (observes Newcome) “is very far from promising a special protection to those, who have recourse to violence and arms, in support even of truth and right.” p. 283. How different is this from the spirit of Mahometanism and of Popery!

† See Newcome, pp. 390. 439.

he assumed, by a series of close and connected reasoning *,—which prejudice indeed did resist, and sophistry may still elude, but which can never be addressed in vain to men of sober and dispassionate judgement. The instruments which reason is accustomed to use in the search or the defence of what it conceives to be truth, were employed by Jesus to confound the petulance, to correct the mistakes, and to enlighten the understanding of his adversaries. Indeed it is impossible for the most captious infidel to suggest any fair and adequate mode of demonstrating his divine mission, which was not at some time or other produced in the sight, and in the hearing, of the Jewish people. The disciples exacted not a blind obedience from those whom they addressed; but they reasoned from the prophecies contained in the Scriptures, and enforced their arguments by the evidence of facts. “With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resur-

* In the Sermon on the mount, Matt. capp. v. vi. and vii. are many admirable specimens of close reasoning and logical inference, as also, in the xiith chapter of the same Evangelist. In St. John however are to be found the greatest variety of instances, in which the force of argument is directly applied to establish the divinity of Christ's mission. See chapters iii. 11, 20. v. 31, 39. vii. 18. viii. 46, 54. x. 25, 34, &c. xiv. 10. 29. xv. 24.

resurrection of the Lord Jesus."—"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." Nor must we forget the generous encomium which is passed by the sacred historian upon the Jews of Berea, not for acquiescing without examination, nor for assenting without inquiry, but because "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so *."—To the same effect are many passages in the Epistles of the first propagators of the Gospel. St. Paul, after enjoining his proselytes to examine themselves whether they be in the faith, openly makes this acknowledgement; "we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." In the character of a Bishop, drawn by the same Apostle, he is described to be, "Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers †."

St.

* See Acts iv. 33. xvii. 2, 3. and 11.

† Mr. Wakefield's translation of this verse expresses the sense of the original still more clearly. "Keeping to the

St. Peter also exhorts to the same effect: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear *."

THUS we see that Jesus and his disciples, in publishing the Gospel, proposed and adopted the criteria, to which recourse must be had in the investigation of all truth. They appealed to the convincing evidence of facts, and enforced that appeal by the powers of reasoning. They brought forward testimony, which it was competent to their antagonists to disprove or object to, if there had been any grounds of objection; and they reasoned in defence of the conclusions they formed from sources, which it was equally in the power of their hearers to examine and to understand. And as if for the express purpose of guarding against a too hasty assent, they urged their investigation of those sources of information, and praised as noble the conduct of those men, who searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Now surely no conduct

true doctrine which he hath been taught, that he may be able to encourage *some* by wholesome instruction, and confute *others* who contradict." The words τὰ οὐρανά λόγια, appear to me to mean, that series of facts and doctrines, which formed the substance of the Apostles' preaching, and was entirely worthy of credit.

* See 2 Cor. xiii. 8. Tit. i. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

duct can be more free from the suspicion of artifice, or the imputation of bigotry. To lay your claims to assent fairly and fully before the world, to desire that they may be scrutinized with all possible exactness, and to expect acquiescence only as you have the means of enforcing conviction, is a proceeding so equitable and reasonable, that it might be thought no one could refuse such a cause the hearing, and still less object to it as containing in its principles the odious spirit of intolerance.

WHETHER therefore we look to the doctrines of the Christian religion, as published by its author, or as enforced by his friends and followers; or whether we consider the manner, in which those doctrines were offered to the general acceptance of mankind; it is surely impossible not to acknowledge, that the charge of *introducing* bigotry into the world is directly contradicted by the most unequivocal testimony, that history can supply: and with respect to the charge of *perpetuating* it, I scruple not to assert, that there is not, in the whole compass of the New Testament, a single passage, upon which it can be founded, without bidding defiance to all the established laws of accurate

curate interpretation.—Such is my conviction upon the question of fact; and it well deserves to be remarked, that, having so few worldly means for propagating his religion, Jesus would have acted a most unwise and inconsistent part, in encouraging that intolerance, which must have alarmed his hearers for the safety of their own favourite tenets, and determined them to resist, even with violence, the introduction of any other.

MR. Godwin's assertion shall now be brought to a fair issue; since he has produced what he considers as some authority for it, which may properly come under our consideration, when treating of the second article of charge, viz.

THE improper and unwarrantable stress laid upon faith.

"It is the characteristic of this religion," he says, "to lay the utmost stress upon faith. It's central doctrine is contained in this short maxim, He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

FROM the manner in which this text is introduced, as well as from what follows, it is apparent that this writer affixes to the word *damned* the vulgar sense it has obtained

tained in the English language. Now certainly a writer, so ardent in his professions for the cause of truth as Mr. Godwin, is the very last person, who ought to support any position, and particularly one of such infinite consequence, by the misapplication of a translation*.—Surely he might have known, and knowing he ought to have stated, that neither *πιγεύσας*, nor *σωθήσεται*, nor *καταχριθήσεται* has the narrow and confined sense, which is necessary for the support of his argument. That they who reject the Gospel, when proposed to them with suitable evidence, will be exposed to condemnation; while those, who receive and practise it, will ensure a blessing, is certainly the position, and the only position, contained in this passage. The position itself is founded upon the principle, that Christ
was

* Mr. Godwin, I understand, was for some time teacher of a dissenting congregation in Suffolk; and whether he did, or did not believe the Gospel, while he taught it, we may presume that, in the course of his education or of his ministry, he sometimes had occasion to consult the writings of learned interpreters. Is it possible then, that he should be unacquainted with the various explanations of the word, which, in the common English Bible, is translated *damned*? The same observation may be extended to Mr. Godwin's probable knowledge of the different senses, given to the word *saved*. Was it mere forgetfulness then, that these different interpretations of two such important words were unnoticed, when he wrote "The Enquirer?"

was divinely commissioned, and invested with proper credentials. It surely is next to be imagined, that the Almighty would plan and announce a dispensation to his creatures in such a manner, that they would be altogether justified in refusing it, or left quite at liberty to refuse it from inattention or from obstinacy, or from pride, or from malignity, or from secular considerations of interest and power. God addresses us as a Being, who knoweth what is best for us, and hath a right to our obedience when he claims it. If therefore he prescribes our duty to us, affording at the same time sufficient evidence, that the important lesson is taught under his immediate authority, man is certainly accountable to him for the motives, which have led him to reject that lesson. What the condemnation thus incurred is, we are not precisely informed in this text, as the term used in the original is exceedingly comprehensive: it certainly implies our being liable to some punishment; and that punishment certainly will be inflicted in exact proportion to the degree of our guilt. But that guilt will vary with the nature and number of the opportunities which we have had for obtaining information.

information, and with the motives, which may have induced us to disregard it. These however are circumstances, which it is not for fallible man to judge of, but for *Him* only, by whom we shall all be judged at the last day! These observations I shall beg leave to strengthen by producing the words of an excellent commentator upon the language of the New Testament. ‘Ο *πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς*) *Qui religionis meae doctrinam suscepit, et baptismo se ei obstrinxerit.* Πιστεύειν hīc, ut sāpē, significat *religionis doctrinam cognitam suscipere cum assensu, et constanti proposito studiōque præceptis ejus obsequendi.* Vid. Act. ii. 44. iv. 32. xvi. 34. Tit. iii. 8. Hinc ipsa *religionis doctrina nominatur πίστις*, i Tim. iv. 1. Epist. Jud. ver. 3, 20. Est igitur hīc *πιστεύειν* idem quod *μαθητεύεσθαι*, discipulum *señtatorēmque Christi fieri*, Matt. xxviii. 19. *σωθήσεται*) *Salutem consequetur*; liberabitur à pœnis peccatorum, à superstitione, erroribus et vitiis; ad cognitionem veritatis, ad veram virtutem et felicitatem æternam perveniet. Hæc enim omnia ista vox complecti solet. ὁ δὲ *ἀπιστος*) Non autem credens Evangelio, quod ipsi annuntiatum fuerit. *κατακριθήσεται*) Retentione peccatorum, et suppliciis æternis majoribus, quam

quām quæ eos manent, quibus hæc doctrina non est annunciatæ *.

MR. GODWIN thus states another insinuation to the prejudice of the Gospel. "What it is, the belief of which is saving, the records of our religion have left open to controversy." To this a brief and plain reply may be made. No one acquainted with Scripture, will hesitate to pronounce, that the belief, required, in "the records of our religion," is the belief, that "Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world †"—"the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world ‡."—"That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent ||," is pronounced to be "eternal life," even in that solemn and affecting address, which our Redeemer poured forth to the Father,
just

* Rosenmüller ad locum. Mr. Godwin has chosen not only to treat this as an universal proposition, but to take the terms of it in their most offensive signification. It is plain, that the meaning of the terms admits of considerable qualification; and I wish him to consider, whether the circumstances, under which these words were uttered, do not require, that some further limitation should be fixed to the proposition itself.

† John iv. 42.

‡ John xi. 27.

|| John xvii. 3. See moreover chapters, i. 49. iii. 15, &c. v. 46. vi. 29, 35, 40, 47, 69. vii. 31, 38. viii. 30, 31, 46. ix. 35—38. x. 25, 42. xi. 25, 45. xii. 11, 42, 44, &c, xiv. 10, &c, xvi. 9, 27, 30.

just before the commencement of his sufferings. Whatsoever controversy may have been stirred about the meaning of these passages, it will, I apprehend, be an extremely difficult task, for the ingenuity of the most prejudiced unbeliever, to prove, that the fault lies in the ambiguity of the records themselves.

"THE fundamental nature of Faith," continues Mr. G. "is one of the most unquestionable lessons of the the Gospel." "Faith," he further observes, "is not only necessary to preserve us from the pains of hell: it is also requisite as a qualification for temporal blessings. When any one applied to Jesus to be cured of any disease, he was first of all questioned respecting the implicitness of his faith; and in Galilee, and other places, Christ wrought not many miracles, because of their unbelief."

I HAVE before* examined, how far it
was

* See Chapter iv. of this work. I am happy in finding myself enabled to strengthen the observations made in that chapter, by some extracts from a work, which I had not the good fortune to meet with till very lately. The book, to which I allude, is entitled, "An Essay on the Character of the Apostles and Evangelists: designed to prove that they were not Enthusiasts, &c. by the Rev. Richard Graves, B.D. Junior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin."

was proper, and even necessary, for a teacher sent from God to insist upon faith as a previous

"It may be necessary here to remark," (observes this candid and judicious writer) "that the series of miracles, which our blessed Lord performed, was decidedly above every possibility of being accounted for by any enthusiastic delusion, or any force of imagination in the persons, on whom these miracles were wrought: a suspicion, which has been sometimes raised, from our Lord's appearing to require faith in those who were healed, and from it's being recorded, that he could not, or would not, work mighty works at Nazareth, because of their unbelief. But even in those cases, which have given occasion to this suspicion, from our Lord's requiring faith before he conferred his miraculous favours, one observation, which has not, I think, been sufficiently attended to, seems to me to prove to a certainty, that it was not because the success of the miracle, in any degree, depended on this faith. We uniformly find that our Lord required faith, only in the person, *at whose request* the miracle *was vouchsafed*, not at all *in the patient on whom it was wrought*, except he applied *in person* for the cure. Thus, when the nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, applied to our Saviour at Cana of Galilee, to come down and heal him, for he was at the point of death; our Lord answers him, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. But go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed, and went his way.' Now, could the force of imagination in the father, heal the absent son?"—p. 14. This author then proceeds to consider the case of the centurion at Capernaum, Matt. viii. 5—13. then, those instances, in which he refused miracles to the Pharisees, who sought a sign; to Herod; and to the Nazarites. "In all these cases" (he says) "the Son of God *would not* gratify the vain and unreasonable expectations of some, or waste his miracles on others, who despised both him and them; for he *could not* do this consistently with the dignity of his office, and the object of his mission, which was calculated to try and exalt the moral character of men, by supplying abundant evidence to the fair and humble inquirer, without extorting the assent of the wilfully blind and obstinately negligent, or violently subduing to a reluctant submission, the incorrigibly vicious and perverse.

"Thus

vious moral qualification, without which supernatural aid ought not to have been imparted. To bestow the extraordinary bounty of Heaven upon those, whose prejudices and vices rendered them unworthy of the ordinary gifts of Providence, and to multiply the means of conviction to them, so as to control their assent irresistibly, might be said to imply a greater regard for the unjust than for the just, and would ill accord with the character and pretensions of him, whose high prerogative and express office it is, to "reward every man according to his works." These considerations have however been so fully urged, that I trust Mr. Godwin's insinuation has so far been
antic-

" Thus it was, that the want of faith prevented our Lord from dispensing his miraculous favours; but never did the benign Jesus, when implored, refuse to exercise his supernatural power in relieving misery; and in no instance did he ever attempt to exercise it without full success; while in the objects, and in the manner of the operation, he constantly displayed a just selection and calm dignity, utterly inconsistent with the extravagance of fanaticism." p. 17.

Mr. Graves concludes his observations upon this subject in the following note. " Finally, in all instances, when faith was required, it was from those, who deliberately and voluntarily applied to our Lord. Now if such applications proceeded from idle curiosity, or insincere hearts, ought they to have been complied with? was not therefore an avowal of their sincere faith, natural and reasonable, before our Lord would exert his divine power in their behalf?"—p. 284.

anticipated and refuted. Yet I am desirous of remarking further, that the objection, as here made, plainly intimates, that faith was insisted upon to aid the work of imposture which was carrying on: or in other words, that no miracles were attempted to be wrought by Jesus or his followers, until the imaginations of those around them were previously disposed to be persuaded of every thing, which they were told they ought to believe. If such were the intent, for which this disposition of mind was inculcated as indispensable, surely these workers of miracles were not very expert in their trade of deceit, since they have themselves plainly and without scruple confessed the only arts, to which they must upon such a supposition have had recourse. To quote a passage, more to Mr. Godwin's purpose, than any to which he has referred, we are expressly told, that Jesus in his own country *could not* perform any miracle, *εἰς ἡδύνατο ἐκεῖ οὐδέμιαν δύναμιν ποιῆσαι*, "save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them*."

Now,

* Mark vi. 5. This passage was explained in the foregoing extracts from Mr. Graves.—It deserves however, from it's importance, very full consideration. And I am happy to refer to a writer, so capable of communicating instruction

Now, if the miracles of Jesus had no other reality, than what the credulity of the spectators supplied, is it in the least degree probable, that his friends, and upon this supposition, his accomplices, should so unnecessarily have laid open the source of the credit he obtained, and so explicitly revealed the artifices he employed? If this faith had been enjoined for a sinister purpose, and particularly for one so easy to be detected

struction as Abp. Newcome. See pp. 146—150. The words rendered *he could not*, are thus explained by Glafs: Difficultèr, et cum tædio quasi, miracula ibi fecit; pertæsus videl. infidelitatis Nazarethanorum, de quâ miratus v. 6, et conquestus fuisse v. 4, memoratur. Quædam autem miracula ibidem à Christo facta fuisse, eodem v. 5. dicitur. Philog. Sacra, p. 564. Glafs has a canon, expressly upon this subject, which I shall make no apology for laying before my readers.

Verbum potestatis non rarò pro verbo debiti et juris accipitur; ita ut *posse*, idem ac licere, *non posse*, idem ac non licere, seu non debere, significet. *ibid.*

In confirmation of this rule he refers to Gen. xxiv. 50. xxxiv. 14. xlivi. 31. xliv. 22, 26. Deut. xvi. 5. 2 Sam. xvii. 17. Acts iv. 20. 1 Cor. iii. 11. x. 21. and Galat. iv. 15.

Addendum iis, quæ dicta sunt, quod Verbum potestatis quandoque pro verbo difficultatis ac molestiæ accipitur. Quod et ipsum in negativâ oratione (et eâ, quæ negativæ æquipollent) frequentius est. Alii sic exprimunt: Non posse dicitur aliquando de re arduâ, et quæ non fiat citra molestiam et incommodum singulare. Ruth iv. 6. Esth. viii. 6. Psal. ci. 5. Luk. xi. 7. Joh. vi. 60. vii. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 1. Apoc. ii. 2. ib. Canon xii. Lib. iii. Tractat. 3.

Let me add a brief remark from Le Clerc, ad Gen. xxxvii. 4. *Non possumus facere, quæ dudum facere noluimus, et quæ affectui, aut rationibus nostris, contraria sunt.* This excellent critic refers to Grotius's note upon this verse in St. Mark.

detected as the objection supposes, are the Sacred Historians the persons, and the only persons, through whom we were to be informed, that this docility of disposition was the necessary condition to the performance of a miracle? Is it not contradictory to common sense, to suppose that this was the case?—On the other hand, the open and unsuspicious manner, in which the fact is constantly mentioned, ought to satisfy us that this injunction at least had nothing to do with imposture. I conceive then that the circumstance is so far from diminishing, that it adds to, the credibility of the Gospel history: and having before attempted to prove, that the enjoining this previous qualification is so far from being repugnant to the moral and benevolent views of the Deity in imparting to mankind a more perfect dispensation of religion, that on the contrary it was essential to the success of those views, I proceed to repel the third part of the charge, which relates to

CERTAIN moral defects in the character and temper of Jesus.

“ NEVER” (asserts Mr. Godwin) “ were curses poured out in a more copious stream, or with a more ardent and unsparing zeal, than

than by the meek and holy Jesus, upon those who opposed his pretensions."

SURELY this is a most lamentable instance of the lengths, to which prejudice will carry a man, who professes to love truth so ardently as Mr. Godwin does. He may perhaps be surprised to hear himself accused of prejudice: but if Voltaire has been pronounced "an intolerant bigot*" in consequence of his zeal against Ecclesiastical establishments; and if Gibbon has been accused of "hating Christianity so cordially that he might seem to revenge some personal injury †," this more modern objector must allow me to class him with these zealots of infidelity, and to charge him with evident marks of prejudice in his mode of attacking our religion. The animated rhetorical flourish, the pointed and acrimonious sneer, and above all, the gross, I do not say, the intended, violation of truth in this sentence, fully justify me in this assertion.—In one word, I assert, that there is not a single text in Scripture which will bear out any accuser in the declaration, that, upon any occasion, or in any circumstance, Jesus Christ ever uttered

* And this too by Gibbon! See Vol. VI. p. 442. not. Ed. 4to.

† See Porson's Preface to Letters to Archdeacon Travis.

uttered a curse *. I confess that I should have searched my Testament again and again, without fixing upon any passage, from which I could imagine that such a conclusion as Mr. Godwin's could be drawn.

—This trouble however is spared me, as he has referred to a passage, which I conclude he thought the best adapted to his purpose. It stands thus in our English Version. “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” This verse, when properly understood, certainly contains a most severe and merited denunciation, but not a vindictive imprecation—

It

* The only passage, which seems at all to countenance such an opinion, is Mark xi. 13—21. concerning which I must beg leave to quote Newcome’s judicious remarks. “When our Lord blasted the barren fig-tree, he pronounced the words, “Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever,” with his usual majesty and sedateness. His action was not the result of disappointment, because he hungered; but it arose from his fixt attention to convey important truths in the most lively manner. And when Peter observed on the morrow, that the fig-tree, which Jesus had cursed, was withered away, he probably used a Hebrew-Syriac phrase, signifying that the tree had been *destroyed** by Jesus’s powerful word.” p. 392. and before p. 311.

If Mr. Godwin choose to call this judicial and prophetic devotion of the barren fig-tree by the name of *cursing*, I have no objection; but I must, in that case, beg that he will allow the reality of the miracle; or at least attend to the qualified meaning of the word. See Biel and Schleusner in voce καταργάωμαι.

* “Had become כַּרְבֵּה, See Heb. vi. 8. Deut. xxviii. 18.”

It announces that evil would befall those who were thus addressed, and it implies that they deserved punishment on account both of their craft and their cruelty, but certainly it is not expressive of a *wish* that such evil should befall them*.

LET us however inquire, what is the ground of the denunciation, which we read in this text? Is it the mere rejection of the Gospel? Certainly not. And, be it observed, that in no other passage, where the mere act of disbelieving is mentioned, without any reference to the motives of unbelief, or to the moral character of the unbelievers, do we find any vestige of an irrevocable sentence of condemnation in the language of our Lord. Is it even the general wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees in their moral agency, as distinct from their conduct in religious matters? No. And yet surely such wickedness might have reached

* Schleusner thus explains, γεννήματα ἵχιδνῶν: O progenies viperina! h. e. metaphoricè, O homines insignis perversitatis, in quos parentum vitiositas propagata fuit. in v. γεννήματα. Rosennüller thus gives the sense of the whole verse, but certainly too loosely: Homines peccandi, majorum peccatorum posteri, minimè effugietis poenam gravissimam. Grotius, more correctly: Tales cum sitis, qui fieri potest, ut gravissimum, non hujus tantum, sed et alterius, facili supplicium evitetis?

reached a degree of guilt, which would have justified any religious teacher in pronouncing them the objects of future condemnation. What then is the crime, which called forth such marked and unusual severity from the mouth of Christ? It was the highest degree of moral depravity, upon a subject connected with religion. It was the accumulation of practical intolerance, upon speculative bigotry. It was hypocrisy, combined with cruelty.

In some foregoing verses, our Saviour had represented the Scribes and Pharisees, as cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, but as being full of extortion and excess within. Upon this circumstance he minglest exhortation with reproof—"cleanse that which is within the cup and platter." Afterwards he proceeds, from censuring their scrupulous observance of ceremonies, to reproach their fondness for the praise of men. He likens them unto whitened sepulchres, beautiful outwardly, but within full of dead men's bones: and adds, "even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Thus far the language of Christ evidently does point to the general misconduct of the Scribes and Pharisees. But, accord-

according to the gradations of their guilt, we find gradations of severity in the words of Christ. For in the last instance, which Mr. Godwin has attacked without regard to the context, and which I mean to vindicate by comparing it with the context, our Lord arraigns the bigotry and the intolerance of the Pharisees themselves, breaking out into overt acts of murderous violence against himself and his followers, and standing in direct opposition to those moral principles, the validity of which they had themselves admitted in the case of persecuted Prophets. Their behaviour therefore involved inconsistency, hypocrisy, and barbarity. They built the tombs of the Prophets, they garnished the sepulchres of the righteous, they said "if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But Christ foreknew, what their subsequent conduct indisputably proved, that they would be partakers in the blood of himself and his disciples: and therefore he said, "Ye are witnesses to yourselves, that ye are the children* of them, which

* Videri vultis Prophetas colere, et damnare Patres vestros
Prophetarum occisores, at interim parem in me et meos cru-
delitatem exercendo, vosmet non solum naturâ, sed et mori-
bus

which killed the prophets." When they should have filled up the measure of their fathers; when they should have acted against other moral teachers upon the wicked motive, which they condemned in their fathers, who had slain the prophets; when they should have not merely rejected the doctrines of Christ, and opposed his pretensions, but have conspired to the infliction of a cruel death upon the persons, who believed those doctrines and supported those pretensions; when their guilt should have been thus aggravated by a variety of concurring circumstances, our Lord justly and indignantly exclaims, "How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?" How can ye escape that final and extreme punishment, which in your own language is called the condemnation of Gehenna *?—I grant that future punishment was in these words denounced against the Scribes and Pharisees.—I deny that it was denounced against them, merely for opposing Christ's pretensions.

bus, Propheticidarum filios esse demonstratis. Gerhardi Harm. Evang. ap. Poli Synops. Genuini parentum vestrorum estis filii, ut naturâ, ita ingenio et indole. Elegantissimè hoc à Salvatore dicitur, aliquam habens æquivocationem. Nam et eorum ab illis parricidis originem natalesque ducendos, et imitationem operum eorundem, similitudinémque ingenij atque morum significare potest. Rosenm.

* See Lowth's Isaiah. Notes pp. 160. 282.

sions.—I maintain that it was denounced against that savage intolerance, which prompted them to scourge and to crucify Jesus and his followers.—And if the doctrines of Jesus were true, if the miracles ascribed to him were really performed, if his life was holy, and if the Apostles taught and acted, as they appear from Sacred history to act and to teach, is there any shock given to our feelings of moral proportion between the guilt imputed to the Pharisees, and the punishment denounced against them?—Upon the question thus stated, I appeal to the justice, and even the candour, of every man who admits a moral government and a future life,

BUT on what account, may we ask, are these farcastic invectives directed by Mr. Godwin against the conduct of Jesus Christ? and whom is he endeavouring to shield from the fury of a malevolent assailant? No doubt he is espousing the cause of some enlightened Philosophers, whose generous attempts to enlarge the understanding, and increase the happiness, of their countrymen, were opposed by the power of a tyrant, and defeated by the intolerance of a bigot! No doubt he is protecting from the attack of
igno-

ignorance and error some, whose doctrines breathed the purest benevolence, and who were indefatigable in their disinterested researches after truth ! He is defending a virtuous few from the menaces and insults of one, who substituted authority for evidence, and counteracted the efforts they made for the melioration and perfectibility of their species ! The very reverse of all this. Mr. Godwin heroically steps forth in defence of fanatical and cruel priests, of crafty and interested politicians, to protect them from the reproaches of a person, who inculcated the purest lessons of morality, and practised the most exalted benevolence. He is vindicating prejudice, selfishness, and bigotry, against Him, who was devoted to the generous purpose of delivering the human race from these, and all other, moral evils. He is defending "hypocrites, who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers;" who "paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin, BUT OMITTED THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE LAW, JUDGMENT, MERCY, AND TRUTH;" men, who perverted divine and human laws to the purposes of their own selfish and cruel policy. These enemies to reform, these oppressors

professors of truth, these persecutors of virtue, has a modern philosopher valiantly, but inconsistently, undertaken to defend against the honest indignation of Him, "WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD*;" "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" who, even "when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him, that judgeth righteously †."

SURELY, when we reflect upon the spirit and the tendency of Mr. Godwin's accusations against Jesus, as containing, indirectly but substantially, a plea for Scribes and Pharisees, we may retort upon the adversaries of Christianity the charge, which they have again and again levelled against Christians. In the opinions of philosophers, it should seem, as well as priests, the end justifies the means; the convert to Deism is not more anxious to set bounds to his zeal, than the convert to Christianity; and, by that zeal, infidelity, as Infidels themselves have sometimes said of orthodoxy, is supposed by it's votaries to atone for the want of precision, impartiality, and candour.

PERHAPS however, we shall be told, these characters and these facts are delivered to us

* Acts x. 38.

† 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.

us through the medium of the Sacred Historians, and may therefore be questionable. The inference is not very legitimately drawn; and cannot be urged with consistency by any one, who founds his objections upon the evidence which they supply. But to avoid cavil, I shall appeal to a witness, who is above all exception; I mean Josephus, a bigoted Jew; who had ample opportunities of observing the conduct and dispositions of his countrymen. "I will not suppress" (he exclaims) "what the strength of my feeling dictates. I think if the Romans had delayed coming against these offenders, that the city would have been swallowed up by an earthquake, or overwhelmed by a deluge, or consumed by fire from Heaven, like Sodom: for it produced a much more impious race than those, who were thus destroyed." There is another very remarkable passage. "That period was very fruitful in wickedness among the Jews: so that they left no evil work unpractised; and, if a man chose to exercise his imagination, he could not invent for them a new crime: to such a degree were they diseased privately and publickly, and so ambitiously did they contend to exceed

ceed each other in acts of impiety to God, and of injustice to their neighbour*."

If a witness so disinterested, and so free from suspicion, has borne testimony to the aggravated guilt of the "Scribes and Pharisees," we are not only furnished with satisfactory proof, that the reproaches were merited, and consequently, that Jesus was completely justified in uttering them, but we may press the reply still further, and remark, that, as he expressed on this occasion the feelings of a good man, so he exercised the authority, and displayed the prescience, of a prophet. The passage in question, we should observe, is immediately followed by a prediction of the temporal calamities,

* Bell. Jud. Lib. V. c. xiii. sect. 6. and Lib. VII. c. viii. sect. 1. These, and other passages to the same effect, are cited by Newcome, p. 267. I may add also the evidence of the Talmud itself, and other Jewish writings, as to the real character of the Pharisees. For this important testimony I am indebted to Schoettgen, who was most deeply read in these books, and who urges the fact as a proof, that the compilers of them were not acquainted with the writings of the New Testament. *Tandem volumina Talmudica, et alia, eosdem errores et vitia Pharisaorum enarrant, quæ à Christo servatore taxantur, et vivis coloribus depinguntur. Quod si verò talia ab ipsis in scriptis N. T. lecta fuissent, sanè vix credibile est, ipsos eadem scriptis suis inserturos, atque veritatem dictorum Servatoris testimonio firmissimo adstructuros fuisse.* Præfat. in Hor. Hebraic. et Talmud. &c. sect. 15. Dresd. et Lips. 1733.

calamities, which were destined to fall upon the hardened and impenitent Jews: and in that prediction, pointed as it is against those, who opposed the pretensions of Christ, we perceive the most unequivocal marks of tenderness and benevolence. Nor is the fact itself merely foretold, but all the circumstances are enumerated, which were to attend that signal manifestation of the divine displeasure; and even the time of their completion is explicitly declared. "Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." If Mr. Godwin shall not object to examine the correspondence between the prediction and the events foretold, I recommend to his earnest attention what Lardner, and Newton, and Newcome*, have brought together upon the subject, with an accuracy of investigation and a fulness of proof, which will assuredly baffle every attempt to discredit the divine authority of the Christian dispensation. Into this striking completion of prophecy it is not my object to enter;—any

* Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 38, &c. Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, xviii—xxi. and Newcome's Observations on our Lord's conduct, pp. 202—277. See also Kett's History the Interpreter of Prophecy, Class 1. Chap. x.

any attempt indeed of that nature would be superfluous after the meritorious labours of the learned men above-mentioned. It is however strictly within the province of this argument to remark, that a candid man, really desirous of ascertaining the moral feelings by which a speaker was actuated, would have taken into his consideration the whole discourse, and not have confined himself merely to a part. The part, which has been selected, is indeed very far from warranting Mr. Godwin's inference: but if he had adverted to the words which immediately follow, he might have observed so much humanity and tenderness, such a total absence of an angry or malevolent spirit, as ought to have prevented him from staining his book with the page which I have transcribed.—If Mr. G. produced one passage of our Lord, why does he omit another? If his nice and tender feelings were shocked with the threat of damnation against the Scribes and Pharisees, would they not have been gratified, when he read? “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together,

even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate *."

LET me, in conclusion, warn this writer, who professes himself the friend of truth, and the determined enemy of prejudice, to conduct his inquiries after the former with more candour, and to guard against the effects of the latter with more circumspection. If, in thus pursuing his researches, he cannot bring himself to admit the credibility of the Gospel history, let him at least abstain from invectives, so gross and unfounded, against a character, which *almost all* it's enemies have confessed them-

* Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. See moreover that exquisitely pathetic address in Luke xix. 41, &c. and also xxiii. 27, &c. I confess, I think a man must have a sluggish sensibility, who peruses these words, and considers the circumstances, under which they were uttered, without the strongest emotions of awe, love, reverence, and admiration, for the character of the person, who delivered them.

The arguments, which I have endeavoured to employ against the animadversions of Mr. Godwin upon this address to the Scribes and Pharisees, will be found to receive great confirmation, and the character of our Lord to be completely vindicated, by the observations of Abp. Newcome respecting the time and the occasion, when it was delivered. This excellent writer has considered the subject, with his usual ability, in two distinct parts of his work, pp. 94—97. and 392—397. I will not weaken the force of his remarks by transcribing only a part; and, I am persuaded, I shall consult both the improvement, and the pleasure, of my readers by recommending the whole to their careful perusal.

themselves bound to revere. If he cannot be persuaded to acknowledge the sublime and impressive virtues of Jesus, let him learn at least to regulate his conduct by those maxims of prudence and decorum, which an heathen poet both inculcated and adopted toward heathen Divinities :

—ἀπό μοι λόγου
 τετον, σόμα, ῥίψον·
 ἐπεὶ ΤΟ ΓΕ ΛΟΙΔΟΡΗΣΑΙ
 ΘΕΟΥΣ, ΕΧΘΡΑ ΣΟΦΙΑ · καὶ
 τὸ καυχᾶσθαι παρὰ καιρὸν,
 μανίαισιν ὑποκρέει *.

* Pindar. Olymp. ix. Strophe 6.



CHAPTER VIII.

VIEW OF THE DEFECTS OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE MAHOMETAN RE- LIGION.

Connection of the proposed inquiry with the design of this work.—Situation of the Roman and Persian Empires.—Genius and temper of the Arabs.—Illustrious descent of the Impostor.—Protected by his uncle the Prince of Mecca.—Advantageous marriage.—Qualifications of mind and body.—Conceives the design of establishing a new religion.—Slow progress of this design.—Danger.—Flight to Medina.—Assumption of temporal power.—Inducements to his followers.—Plunder.—Paradise.—Predestination.—Success in his wars.—Fanaticism of his followers accounted for.—Objects of worship changed, but modes of worship retained.—Doctrine of one Supreme God not new in Arabia.—No change in moral habits.—Sensual pleasures allowed.—Koran.—Extravagant claims in favour of it refuted.—Deficiency of internal and external evidence.—Death of the Impostor.—Appeal to infidels on behalf of our holy Religion.

AMONG other objects, proposed by this work, I have endeavoured, wherever it has been practicable, to bring the substantial

substantial support of facts to the aid of argument. In the execution of my design, I have been occasionally led to consider, in what way persons, *actually* influenced by the motives which have been *imputed* to Jesus and his Apostles by the adversaries of Christianity, have invariably conducted themselves; and to shew, in what particulars of times and of circumstances these persons, whether fanatics or impostors, essentially differ from those, with whom they are too often confounded. By an honest and undissembling appeal to history, I would oppose to the enemies of revealed truth their favourite test of experience.

In this design, it would doubtless appear a considerable omission, if I neglected an inquiry into the causes, which produced the success of the Arabian Impostor; since that success has sometimes been confounded, by the designing or the unthinking, with the success which attended the propagation of the Gospel.

I SHALL therefore advert, as briefly as I can, to some of the most discriminating circumstances, under which the Prophet of Arabia was enabled to execute his portentous

tous designs; and these I shall collect from unquestionable sources of information *.

THESE marked and distinct lines of separation between the preaching of the Gospel and the propagation of the Koran will immediately be discovered, if we consider, 1st, The peculiar circumstances of the times in which Mahomet appeared; 2ndly, the temper and genius of the people to whom he addressed himself; and, 3dly, his own natural and acquired advantages.

I. AT the close of the sixth, and in the commencement of the seventh, century, the powers which had so long ruled the Eastern world, the Empire of Constantinople and that of Persia, were visibly declining. The same

* As to the selection of materials for this chapter, which is chiefly historical, the most obstinate unbeliever, I think, will not object to the sources from which they are drawn. The writers here followed are Sale, who is allowed by Gibbon* to be "half a Mussulman;" and Gibbon himself, who is not even half a Christian. I had not an opportunity, until very lately, of procuring the works to which they generally refer, Abulfeda and Abulpharagius, and their learned interpreters, Pocock and Gagnier: nor indeed should I think it necessary to verify every quotation, as I have no suspicion of being misled by my guides. I have consulted Dr. Prideaux in his Life of Mahomet, and I have been instructed and delighted by the Bampton Lectures of Dr. White. But I am not aware that I have stated a single fact, which is not admitted by one, or both, of the Authors first mentioned.

* Vol. V. p. 198. not. 65.

same causes seem to have contributed to the downfall, to which they were evidently verging. A long series of conflicts with each other, intestine confusion and disorder, general relaxation of discipline, and a prevalent corruption of morals, had been gradually sapping the foundation of the thrones, on which Justin and Chosroes were seated.

THE principles of weakness and disunion, by which the vigour of the Roman and Persian monarchies was abated, had the opposite effect of increasing the population and resources of Arabia: since this country, lying contiguous to those once mighty Empires, afforded an asylum to the numerous victims of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. The exiles, whom the impolitic bigotry of the Greek Church, or the insupportable despotism of the Persian prince, drove from their own homes, sought protection in a region, which from the earliest ages preserved many rude, but indelible, features of independence.

WITH this state of affairs in the neighbouring countries, the Arabians had the fullest opportunities of becoming acquainted, not only by means of the fugitives

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tives to whom they performed offices of hospitality, but from the actual observation of such of their countrymen as had served in the armies of the contending Emperors. “The historians of the age of Justinian represent the state of the independent Arabs, who were divided by interest or affection in the long quarrel of the east. The tribe of Gassan was allowed to encamp on the Syrian territory: the princes of Hira were permitted to form a city about forty miles to the southward of the ruins of Babylon. Their service in the field was speedy and vigorous; but their friendship was venal, their faith inconstant, their enmity capricious. It was an easier task to excite, than to disarm, these roving barbarians; and in the familiar intercourse of war, they learned to see, and to despise, the splendid weakness both of Rome and of Persia *.”

II. IF we consider minutely the character and genius of the people to whom Mahomet first addressed himself, the success of his singular attempt will appear to be only commensurate with the means employed for that purpose. The most striking features in the Arabian are his wild and savage

* Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 181. See also Sale, p. 37.

savage independence ; his fondness for martial exploits ; his high sense of his own superiority, and proud contempt* of the rights of others.

THIS spirit of independence had, it is true, prevailed among them so far as to make their own tribes the objects of mutual animosity ; but if their restlessness and courage were so great as to engage them readily in contest with their own countrymen, they would surely prove very formidable adversaries, whensoever their collective strength and impetuosity should be directed against a foreign enemy. So that they seem to have wanted nothing but a principle of union, in order to become distinguished by the rapidity of their conquests.

THE complete independence of their civil life had the natural effect of producing equal liberty in the choice of their religious sentiments : and the variety of strangers, who had taken refuge in Arabia, supplied almost every modification of faith and worship. This variety is traced so successfully by Mr. Gibbon, and its consequences upon the religious notions of the Arabs are so accurately represented, that, I trust, the impor-

* Gibbon, pp. 183, 184.

importance of the subject will justify me in producing a passage of some length from his work, although he has not failed to take an opportunity of indulging in it his talent for sarcastic insinuation against the principles of revealed religion.

“ARABIA was free: the adjacent kingdoms were shaken by the storms of conquest and tyranny, and the persecuted sects fled to the happy land, where they might profess what they thought, and practise what they professed.

“THE religions of the Sabians and Magians, of the Jews and Christians, were disseminated from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. In a remote period of antiquity, Sabianism was diffused over Asia by the science of the Chaldeans, and the arms of the Assyrians. From the observations of two thousand years, the priests and the astronomers of Babylon deduced the eternal laws of nature and providence. They adored the seven gods or angels who directed the seven planets, and shed their irresistible influence upon the earth. The attributes of the seven planets, with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the twenty four constellations of the northern and southern



southern hemisphere, were represented by images and talismans; the seven days of the week were dedicated to their respective deities; the Sabians prayed thrice each day; and the temple of the moon at Haran was the term of their pilgrimage. But the flexible genius of their faith was always ready either to teach or to learn; in the tradition of the creation, the deluge, and the patriarchs, they held a singular agreement with their Jewish captives; they appealed to the secret books of Adam, Seth, and Enoch; and a slight infusion of the Gospel has transformed the last remnant of the Polytheists into the Christians of St. John, in the territory of Baffora. The altars of Babylon were overturned by the Magians; but the injuries of the Sabians were revenged by the sword of Alexander; Persia groaned five hundred years under a foreign yoke; and the purest disciples of Zoroaster escaped from the contagion of idolatry, and breathed with their adversaries the freedom of the desert. Seven hundred years before the death of Mahomet, the Jews were settled in Arabia: and a far greater multitude was expelled from the Holy Land in the wars of Titus and Hadrian. The industrious

trious exiles aspired to liberty and power: they erected synagogues in the cities, and castles in the wilderness; and their Gentile converts were confounded with the children of Israel, whom they resembled in the outward mark of circumcision. The Christian missionaries were still more active and successful: the Catholics asserted their universal reign: the sects, whom they oppressed, successively retired beyond the limits of the Roman Empire: the Marcionites and Manichæans dispersed their *phantastic* opinions and apocryphal gospels: the churches of Yemen, and the princes of Hira and Gassan, were instructed in a purer creed by the Jacobite and Nestorian bishops. The liberty of choice was presented to the tribes: each Arab was free to elect or to compose his private religion: and the rude superstition of his house was mingled with the sublime theology of saints and philosophers. A fundamental article of faith was inculcated by the consent of the learned strangers; the existence of one supreme God, who is exalted above the powers of heaven and earth, but who has often revealed himself to mankind by the ministry of his angels and prophets; and whose grace or justice has interrupted,

rupted, by seasonable miracles, the order of nature. The most rational of the Arabs acknowledged his power, though they neglected his worship; and it was habit, rather than conviction, that still attached them to the relics of idolatry. The Jews and Christians were people of the *book*; the Bible was already translated into the Arabic language, and the volume of the Old Testament was accepted by the concord of these implacable enemies. In the stories of the Hebrew patriarchs, the Arabs were pleased to discover the fathers of their nation. They applauded the birth and promises of Ismael; revered the faith and virtue of Abraham; traced his pedigree and their own to the creation of the first man, and imbibed with equal credulity the prodigies of the holy text, and the dreams and traditions of the Jewish rabbies*.”

THERE is another point in the character of this singular people well worth our attention; which is, their extravagant fondness for eloquence and poetry. One of the accomplishments upon which the Arabians chiefly valued themselves was eloquence, and

* Gibbon, p. 194. See also White's Bampton Lecture, pp. 74, &c.

and a perfect skill in their own tongue. "In this," observes Sale, "they exercised themselves, by composing of orations and poems. Their orations were of two sorts, metrical or prosaic; the one being compared to pearls strung, the other to loose ones. They endeavoured to excel in both, and whoever was able, in an assembly, to persuade the people to a great enterprize, or dissuade them from a dangerous one, or gave them other wholesome advice, was honoured with the title of Khâteb, or orator, which is now given to the Mohammedian preachers."

"THEY pursued a method very different from that of the Greek and Roman orators; their sentences being like loose gems, without connection, so that this sort of composition struck the audience chiefly by the fulness of the periods, the elegance of the expression, and the acuteness of the proverbial sayings; and so persuaded were they of their excelling in this way, that they would not allow any nation to understand the art of speaking in public, except themselves and the Persians; which last were reckoned much inferior in that respect to the Arabians."

"POETRY was in so great esteem among them, that it was a great accomplishment, and a proof of ingenuous extraction, to be able to express one's self in verse with ease and elegance, on any extraordinary occurrence; and even in their common discourse, they made frequent applications of celebrated passages of their famous poets. In their poems were preserved the distinction of descents, the rights of tribes, the memory of great actions, and the propriety of their language; for which reasons an excellent poet reflected an honour on his tribe, so that as soon as any one began to be admired for his performances of this kind in a tribe, the other tribes sent publickly to congratulate them on the occasion, and themselves made entertainments, at which the women assisted, drest in their nuptial ornaments, singing to the sound of timbrels the happiness of their tribe, who had now one to protect their honour, to preserve their genealogies and the purity of their language, and to transmit their actions to posterity; for this was all performed by their poems, to which they were solely obliged for their knowledge and instructions, moral and œconomical, and to which they had

recourse as to an oracle, in all doubts and differences.

"No wonder then that a public congratulation was made on this account, which honour they were yet so far from making cheap, that they never did it but on one of these three occasions, which were reckoned great points of felicity: viz. on the birth of a boy, the rise of a poet, and the fall of a foal of generous breed. To keep up an emulation among their poets, the tribes had once a year a general assembly at Ocadh; a place famous on this account, and where they kept a weekly mart or fair, which was held on our Sunday. This annual meeting lasted a whole month, during which time they employed themselves not only in trading, but in repeating their poetical compositions, contending and vying with each other for the prize; whence the place, it is said, took it's name. The poems that were judged to excel, were laid up in their king's treasuries; as were the seven celebrated poems, thence called Al Moallakât, rather than from their being hung up in the Caaba; which honour they also had by public order, being written on Egyptian silk, and in letters of gold, for which reason

they

they had also the name of Al Modhababât, or the golden verses *."

III. At the period of which we are speaking, the spirit and renown of the Koreishites, were most conspicuous among the Arabian tribes †. They not only possessed the supreme power at Mecca; but, what was of infinitely more importance, the CAABA ‡, or sacred temple, was committed to their care. Of this tribe the most illustrious was the family of the Hashemites, in whom the sovereignty was actually vested. To this family Mahomet owed his birth. His grandfather Abdol Motalleb, the son of Hashem ||, (both of whom were princes deservedly popular for their learning and munificence) was seated on the throne of Mecca, when he was born; and as if every circumstance conspired to render the origin of the future Prophet both fortunate and illustrious, and to mark him out as an object of reverence to his countrymen, he was the only child of Abdallah,

* Sale, p. 27. See Gibbon, p. 183. and not.

† Gibbon, p. 178. ‡ Gibbon, p. 190.

|| Gibbon, pp. 191, 197.

dallah, the favourite son of this venerable chieftain.

MAHOMET, it is true, was early left an orphan, and his patrimony became, in consequence, very inconsiderable. But he found a powerful protector in the virtuous and respectable Abu Taleb, who succeeded to the sovereignty; and who, in spite of the arts and imposture of his nephew, could never be prevailed upon to abandon him*. But, narrow as were the circumstances of his fortune during early life, he fully repaired the loss he had sustained, long before the period in which he thought fit to assume the character of a prophet. In the twenty-fifth † year of his age, he was married to Chadijah, a rich widow of Mecca, and thus, even in the acknowledgment of Mr. Gibbon, "was restored to the station of his ancestors ‡."

IF Mahomet was so remarkably favoured by fortune in the circumstances of his birth and connections, he was equally gifted by nature in the qualifications of mind and body. His graceful person, his majestic appear-

* Sale, p. 44. Gibbon, p. 222.

† Twenty-eighth, says Prideaux. But see White, p. 173.
and not.

‡ P. 199.

appearance, his insinuating manners, his captivating addrefs, and, above all, his talents for poetical composition and persuasive eloquence, are the constant theme of the eulogiums of his countrymen. He was patient in labour, he was intrepid in danger, and splendid in munificence. He was therefore a character peculiarly formed to attract the admiration, and to effect the conversion, of a people, who were prepossessed even to enthusiasm in favour of any of these qualities; and who could not fail to be charmed irresistibly, when they saw them all united in this illustrious Koreishite *.

Thus singularly qualified does Mahomet appear to engage the assistance of his countrymen in *any* design, which his extensive talents and aspiring temper might prompt him to undertake. Nor was he disposed to forego the opportunity of employing these materials among a people, upon whom they were so likely to be used with effect. His ambition, or his enthusiasm †, suggested to him the idea of effecting a change in the

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* See his character, as drawn by Sale, p. 41. by White, p. 171. and by Gibbon, p. 199. See also the short, but impressive, character given of Hatem by the same historian, as the perfect model of Arabian virtue. "He was brave and liberal; an eloquent poet, and a successful robber." p. 189.

† For the probable motives of his conduct, see Sale, p. 39.

prevailing religion, or rather of uniting all the various forms of religion into one compact and uniform system*. With a view to this design, he indulged, or affected, a turn for religious meditation. Every year, during the feast of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world; and in the cave of Mount Hera †, near Mecca, projected, or at least contemplated and prepared, his stupendous plan, till it was ripe for execution.

He had reached the fortieth year of his age before he ventured to entrust to another the secret, with which his bosom laboured. He proceeded with the utmost circumspection, and revealed his intentions to those first, over whom he had most influence. His wife, his servant, and his friend were his first converts, and surely not the most difficult to be gained ‡. Chadijah, passionately fond of an affectionate || and spirited husband; Zeid Ebn Haretha, who was immediately presented with his freedom; and Ali, an impetuous stripling in the eleventh year of his age, could not be supposed to withstand

* See White, pp. 77. and 177.

† Gibbon, p. 202. White, pp. 174, 182.

‡ See Gibbon, p. 219.

|| See Gibbon, p. 255. for a proof of Mahomet's attachment to his first wife.

stand his assertions very steadily, or to weigh his pretensions with much discrimination. To these succeeded Abubeker, a man of great personal weight among the Arabs; by whose influence chiefly, six* other persons of distinction in Mecca professed that “ faith, which, under the name of Islam, Mahomet preached to his family and to the nation;” and which is well described, as compounded of an “ eternal truth, and of a necessary fiction: That there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the Apostle of God †.”

THREE years were thus spent in the conversion of about fourteen proselytes. In the following year he openly assumed the prophetic office. That his own family might have the full benefit of the gracious tidings of which he was the messenger, he took measures to assemble them: but, by his own family, his own story was heard with disgust or with ridicule. He proceeded however to preach to the people of Mecca, and to the pilgrims who resorted thither: but by these means he so excited the indignation of the Koreishites, that he would undoubtedly have

* See their names in Sale, p. 43. Gibbon says ten, but the others were not men of such note as these.

† Gibbon, p. 202.

have fallen a victim to their fury, if he had not been protected by Abu Taleb, who still shielded the friend while he despised the impostor.

In the course of five years, his party consisted of upwards of an hundred, the majority of whom were compelled to quit Mecca in consequence of the odium, which the new doctrines and new pretensions of Mahomet excited. This increased so much, that upon the death of his venerable uncle and guardian, the prophet was himself compelled to retire from his native city; nor did he venture to return, without first assuring himself of the protection of Al Motaam Ebn Adi*.

In the chief seat of idolatrous worship, especially while a zealous votary of that worship was in possession of the supreme power, it was likely that the great stand would be made against the schemes of the impostor; and that he would in consequence be exposed to considerable danger. In fact, his death was resolved upon soon after Abu Sophian succeeded to the principality of the republic of Mecca †. Mahomet employed the resources of his cunning to

* Sale, p. 46.

† Gibbon, p. 224.

to avoid the blow which already menaced his destruction ; and with great difficulty succeeded in making his escape to Medina, where a concurrence of favourable circumstances had disposed the majority of the inhabitants to support his pretensions.

In this city he no longer disguised his intention of assuming temporal power ; nor did he fail to give a loose to the passions of his followers, by making his own pretended authority the instrument of his unbounded ambition. The infidels were no longer to be assailed by the gentle arts of insinuation and of eloquence ; the impotent weapons of debate and of persuasion were henceforth to be laid aside ; Islamism was to be propagated by the sword ; its enemies were to be swept from the face of the earth, and their property to become the lawful acquisition of those, who claimed it by the double merit of faith and of valour.

To those, who survived the conflict, suitable advantages were held out from the property and personal service of the vanquished ; while they, who were destined to fall, were assured of immediate admission into the joys of Paradise *.

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* White, pp. 83. 87.

THE more effectually to dispel all uncomfortable reflections from the minds of his followers, and to console those who were strongly attached to the luxuries and pleasures of this life, the doctrine of predestination* was inculcated in the most unequivocal and authoritative terms. Equal peril was attached to the indolence of the voluptuous, and to the activity of the brave; to the coward who declined the battle, and to the warrior who advanced in it's front. The precise term of life was appointed to all, which no artifice could elude, and no despair anticipate.—Such were the maxims, and such the hopes, which elured to the standard of the Arabian prophet hundreds of his restless countrymen. And with these additional motives to valour, can we wonder that they were successful in their first predatory excursions; that this success should be converted into a specious and cogent argument for the truth of his extraordinary pretensions; and that, a violent spirit of fanaticism being once excited, this consummate politician should in time make himself master of Arabia, and live to see his religion embraced by these brave, but illiterate

* Prideaux, p. 81.

rate Barbarians? In fact, after he was in possession of Medina as a rallying point, and after he had erected a standard, to which all, who were fond of change, who thirsted for glory, or longed for plunder, could resort; the success of such captivating doctrines, enforced by such powerful auxiliaries, ceases to excite astonishment. After this period, he so much resembles every other conqueror, that it is needless to investigate minutely the causes of his rapid progress. When some of the roving and martial tribes were once united under a leader of acknowledged talents, and were impelled by the most enthusiastic attachment to his person and cause, it is no wonder that they made successful war against the disunited tribes, however courageous, who seem to have had no leader of talent or activity to oppose to the Impostor. When these were in their turns reduced to the alternative of death or Islamism, and found the new faith so profitable and so indulgent to their temporal gratifications, we surely cannot be surprised, if, together with their conquerors, they oppressed without difficulty the feeble and exhausted Empires, whose glory and whose strength had equally passed away. It

is only necessary to account for the origin of that fanaticism, with which these war-like tribes were at length inspired: when the principle had once taken root, the success, which attended those whom it stimulated to enterprise, is by no means unaccountable.—Mahomet, as a mere conqueror, resembles those, who, without the aid of religion, have at times over-run large portions of the world. Like them, he was sometimes defeated; like them, wounded in battle *; like them, he employed stratagems † to gain victories; and, like them, he sullied the lustre of his victories by cold and remorseless cruelty ‡. “ Does it seem incredible,” exclaims the historian, “ that a private citizen should grasp the sword and the sceptre, subdue his native country, and erect a monarchy by his victorious arms? In the moving pictures of the dynasties of the East, an hundred fortunate usurpers have arisen from a baser origin, surmounted more formidable obstacles, and filled a larger scope of empire and conquest. Mahomet was alike instructed to preach and to fight, and

* Gibbon, p. 234.

† Prideaux, p. 85. Gibbon, p. 239.

‡ Gibbon, pp. 235, 236. White, p. 190.

and the union of these opposite qualities, while it enhanced his merit, contributed to his success : the operation of force and persuasion, of enthusiasm and fear, continually acted on each other, till every barrier yielded to their irresistible power*."

THE only point then about which there can be a moment's hesitation, is the origin of that fanaticism, which this extraordinary man undoubtedly occasioned. And this hesitation will immediately cease, if we recollect the predisposing circumstances in his favour, as they have been already stated, and also take into account the nature and extent of the change, which he really effected in the minds of his countrymen.

IT is unquestionably a matter of great difficulty, to produce any considerable alteration in the religious sentiments and practices of any part of mankind. If I were to question this principle, much of the reasoning, which has been employed in the foregoing parts of this work, would fall to the ground. But it is a subject of great moment, to consider from what cause the difficulty arises.—Does it arise simply from a change in the direction of the abstract principle of faith? Because we transfer the veneration,

* Gibbon, p. 272.

veneration, usually paid to an invisible Being called by one name, to an invisible Being called by another? Does it arise even hence, that we are to concentrate into one object, that attachment and that devotion which had before been divided among several? Does it arise wholly, or even principally, from a change of sentiment?—There is something, no doubt, in all this.—But I conceive that the repugnance, which the mind shews to divest itself of religious opinions, proceeds chiefly from that accumulation of habits, with which particular religious notions have been connected. It arises from the series of actions with which the theory of religion has been imperceptibly, but invariably, associated. And hence it should seem, if the mind be still permitted to hold the same associations of time and place, of pomp and ceremony, of festival and solemnity, that the particular objects of these modes of worship will cease to be of the same importance; and that, if the same ablutions be performed, and the same victims sacrificed in the same temple, the Idolater will be disposed to part with the visible representation before him for the idea of an invisible Being, whose

whose residence he is taught to consider as in Heaven.

UPON this principle we may account for the mutual indulgence, with which idolaters have in general regarded the rites and ceremonies of each other; and the indifference, with which they have permitted the inter-mixture of foreign rites, while their own were retained. Upon the same principle we account for the intolerance with which they treated the Christians, whose creed would not allow the same associations of religious habits and sentiments in their proselytes. Upon the same principle we account for the reluctance shewn by the Jews to admit the change in their religious ceremonies, which Christianity authorized; and, precisely upon the same grounds, the success of Mahomet in spreading his religious theories in Arabia is completely explained.

WE have seen that the belief of one supreme God * was generally entertained in Arabia. At the same time it is certain, that religious rites were performed in honour of various subordinate Deities, with whose images

* Prideaux, p. 95. Gibbon, p. 196. White, p. 177.
and note. Sale, p. 15.

images the Caaba was crowded. The opposition, which Mahomet encountered, was at first extremely violent, and exactly what might have been expected from the pertinacity of idolatry. It was so violent, that he must inevitably have sunk before it, had it not been for the strenuous and unremitting support of the prince of Mecca. Nor could he by any means have overcome the opposition, but by retaining so much of the idolatrous rites and customs, as to render his religion almost the same in every respect with that to which they were before devoted, except that the abstract notion of one God was substituted for the creed of Polytheism, and that the images of the false Deities were removed from the places of worship. The pilgrimages to the Caaba*, and the ceremonies performed there, were not only allowed, but enjoined; the *black stone* was to be held in precisely the same veneration; ablutions were pronounced equally necessary and meritorious as in the *time of ignorance*†; the important duty of fasting was held in the same estimation; and a tacit

* In the circumstance of place therefore Mahomet shewed his regard to resemblance, which Mr. Hume properly states as one great source of the association of our ideas.

† Sale, sect. I.

tacit permission was given to practise, as before, the national rite of circumcision*.

EVEN in their devotions, though the immediate object was changed, yet the Kebla † still pointed to the quarter consecrated by antient superstition. And it deserves to be particularly noticed, that the pretended Apostle did not dare to offer violence to the idols of the Caaba, till he had entered Mecca at the head of a powerful army, blindly attached to their leader, by the success which he had taught them to consider as an irresistible proof of his divine commission, and by the gratification which that success supplied to the cravings of their favourite appetites.

IT is moreover to be remarked, that the doctrine taught by Mahomet, did not necessarily cause any considerable change in the moral habits of his profelytes. The use of wine was indeed forbidden to his followers; but the inhabitants of a warm climate are generally abstemious, and the Arabs were not particularly addicted to the use of fermented

* Vid. Gibbon, pp. 192, 193. and not. Also 213, 215. Sale, pp. 118 and 122. See another instance of his accommodation in Sale, p. 20.

† Prideaux, p. 73.

mented liquors *. But then he supplied them with a large indulgence in the luxuries more captivating to Eastern minds; in women, in baths, and in perfumes. Not only were they taught to look upon these, as allowed pleasures in the present world; but the most enchanting pictures of still ampler enjoyments in Paradise, the same in kind though heightened in degree, were presented to their eager imaginations. Indeed, it would not be possible to fix upon a mode of life, or upon a species of future felicity, so thoroughly adapted to the indolence or the

* See Gibb. p. 252. Mahomet seems to have found little or no difficulty in persuading his followers to abstain from wine. They probably found substitutes, which were better adapted to the climate, and not prohibited by the Koran, in refreshing draughts of Sherbet, or exhilarating doses of opium. Such, at least, are the resources of some among his disciples at the present day. "And how much the Eastern people deal in artificial liquors of prodigious strength, the use of wine being forbidden, may be seen in a curious chapter of Kempfer upon that subject. Amæn. Exot. Fasc. III. Obs. 15." Lowth's notes on Isaiah, p. 13.

When however the Mahometan religion extended beyond the views of it's founder, and his followers became fixed in a different climate, the prohibition against wine appeared harsh, and was consequently disobeyed. A singular fact of this kind is noticed by Andrews, in his History of Great Britain, connected with the Chronology of Europe. "In 1546, Solimon the Second sends an army into Hungary sufficient to preserve his conquests, but remains in person at his Metropolis, in order to regulate the manners of his people. He is particularly severe against the drinkers of wine, and carries his strictness so far, as to order the vines to be rooted up." Vol. I. part II. pag. 297.

the voluptuousness of the inhabitants of Arabia, as those to which Mahomet invited his faithful Musulmen.

HOLDING out, as the Impostor thus did, the most unbounded enjoyment of the pleasures of this world, as well as of that which is to come *, surely it cannot excite surprise that the religion of the Koran triumphed. Had it enjoined more changes of sentiment and of habit †, had it exacted

from

* Sale, p. 44. Gibbon, p. 220.

† "Indifference for rites and opinions still marks the character of the Bedoween, and they might accept, as loosely as they hold, the doctrine of the Koran." Gibbon, p. 240.

In Dr. Campbell's excellent Dissertation upon Miracles, an observation is made, which seems at variance with some positions in this chapter. "It may indeed be affirmed with truth," he says, "that the religion of the wild Arabs was more repugnant to the doctrine of Mahomet, than the religious dogmas of the Jews were to those of Jesus." (p. 116. 3d Edit.). He proceeds to obviate the effects of this concession by some masterly remarks, and by adducing a passage from Montesquieu to this purpose; "That though men have a very strong tendency to idolatry, they are nevertheless but little attached to idolatrous religions; that though they have no great tendency to spiritual ideas, they are nevertheless strongly attached to religions which enjoin the adoration of a spiritual being." De l'Esprit des Loix, liv. 25. chap. 2. I trust, however, that the importance of the subject will justify me in remarking, that the assertion of Dr. Campbell is true so far only, as it regards the *spirit* and *intention* of the religions which he has made the objects of comparison. But certainly it is inaccurate, if we consider the point of view in which the religions appeared to those, who, at the time of their promulgation, respectively embraced or opposed them. And this is the only light in which the fact should be regarded, when

from it's votaries a greater sacrifice of their favourite propensities, than it really did, the system must have found eager and impetuous advocates; and circumstanced as the neighbouring countries then were, opposition to an hardy nation, impelled by fanaticism, must have been vain.

To account however for the success of Mahomet from causes merely human, to shew that predisposing circumstances rendered his

we apply the consideration of the success these religions met with, as one criterion of their truth, or falsehood. Those, who were converted by the Arabian prophet, were by no means united in religious sentiment; nor were they zealous in what they professed; nor did the generality of them disallow the main article of faith, which Mahomet wished to establish, the unity of the Supreme Being. Besides this, as we have seen, their religious associations and habits were left free and unmolested. The Jews, on the contrary, were not only firmly united in the belief of one system of opinions, but attached in an extraordinary degree to that system, which they deemed incompatible with the pretensions of Jesus: moreover, the rites and ceremonies, to which custom and an inveterate error concerning their real value and import had so strongly attached their minds, were pronounced ineffectual and no longer necessary to be observed. Among the Jews also, the immutability of their religion was a popular principle; but there is no trace of such a principle in the nations converted by Mahomet.—Hence then, *practically speaking*, the religion offered by Mahomet to the Arabians was much more in unison with their feelings and opinions, and, in course, much more likely to be embraced by them, than the doctrines of Christianity were, when offered to the acceptance of the Jews, who regarded the letter and not the spirit of the Law, and who had suffered every pure and correct notion of religion to be superseded by a blind and servile adherence to vain ceremonies and absurd traditions.

his attempt easy, and his success probable, is only one among a variety of arguments, which establish beyond contradiction the true nature of the design, which he so boldly undertook to accomplish. It might appear superfluous to detail many of these proofs, but I am unwilling wholly to omit the positive testimony which the Koran itself furnishes against the pretensions of it's author.

THE claims which he made on behalf of this mysterious volume, are extravagant in the highest degree. He confessed himself unable to perform any miracle, but he boldly appealed to this sacred book, as a miracle which supplied the most satisfactory evidence in his favour.—That a book, so surpassing all human compositions, so far exceeding every other book both in diction and in matter, should be composed by a man illiterate and ignorant* like himself, he boldly pronounced to be plainly impossible: and he as boldly pronounced, that it was written by the finger of the Almighty before the creation of the World. “The Mohammedans” says Sale, “absolutely deny the Korân

* See Gibbon, p. 200. note. Dr. White's reasoning upon the subject is highly ingenious, if not altogether conclusive. Pag. 203, 204. and notes xxxvi—xxxviii.

Korân was composed by their prophet himself, or any other for him ; it being their general and orthodox belief that it is of divine original, nay, that it is eternal and uncreated, remaining, as some express it, in the very essence of God ; that the transcript has been from everlasting by God's throne, written on a table of vast bigness, called the preserved table, in which are also recorded the divine decrees, past and future : that a copy from this table, in one volume, on paper, was by the ministry of the angel Gabriel sent down to the lowest Heaven, in the month of Ramadân, in the night of power : from whence Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed by parcels, some at Mecca, some at Medina, at different times, during the space of twenty-three years, as the exigency of affairs required : giving him however the consolation to shew him the whole (which they tell us was bound in silk, and adorned with gold and precious stones of Paradise) once a year ; but in the last year of his life, he had the favour to see it twice. They say, that few chapters were delivered entire, the most part being revealed piece-meal, and written down, from time to time, by the Prophet's amanuenses in such or such a part

a part of such or such a chapter, till they were compleated, according to the directions of the angel *.”

SUCH an assumption at once carries with it its own refutation. If however we consider the inferiority of the Koran to many professed human † compositions, and still more the palpable contradictions which it contains, we may allow the Impostor himself to have been its author, without much indulgence to his claims as the Apostle of God.—Respecting the contradictory passages, it is curious to observe the manner, in which the Mahometan doctors have accounted for them. “They obviate any objection from thence by the doctrine of abrogation; for they say that God in the Korân commanded several things, which were for good reasons afterwards revoked and abrogated ‡.”

It is plain also, that many passages in the Koran were produced, in order to extricate its author from some embarrassment, in which he had been entangled. “For whenever any thing happened which perplexed and gravelled Mohammed, and which

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* Sale, p. 64.

† Gibbon, p. 209. White, p. 255, &c.

‡ Sale, p. 67. See Gibbon, 208. and Prideaux, 118.

he could not otherwise get over, he had constant recourse to a new revelation, as an infallible expedient in all nice cases, and he found the success of this method answer his expectation. It was certainly an admirable and politic contrivance of his to bring down the whole Korân to the lowest Heaven only, and not to the earth, as a bungling prophet would probably have done; for if the whole had been published at once, innumerable objections might have been made, which it would have been very hard, if not impossible, for him to solve. But as he pretended to receive it by parcels, as God saw proper that they should be published for the conversion and instruction of the people, he had a sure way to answer all emergencies, and to extricate himself with honour from any difficulty which might occur. If any objection be hence made to that eternity of the Korân which the Mohammedans are taught to believe, they easily answer it by their doctrine of absolute predestination; according to which, all the accidents, for the sake of which these occasional passages were revealed, were predetermined by God from all eternity *.”

THE passages, here alluded to, are not
only

* Sale, p. 63.

only absolutely destructive of the claims set up by Mahomet in favour of the Koran, because they are each so evidently fabricated for a particular and pressing emergency, but because the occasions themselves, on which he borrowed the aid of these pretended revelations, are so utterly unworthy of the Deity, and even any messenger, bearing a commission from him. Thus the unlimited number of wives with which the Prophet was indulged *; the sanction that was given to his perjury and lust in his amours with Zeineb and with Mary; the variety of laws relative to the appropriation of spoils, as well as the license to destroy his captives in cold blood †, are insurmountable

* Sale, p. 137. Gibbon, 252.

† See Gibbon, p. 254. Sale, pp. 138, 142, 145. And White, p. 190. "Mahomet at one time beheaded near seven hundred Koraidhites, his prisoners, under the most aggravating circumstances of cruelty. The command was not issued in the heat of action, when his passions were inflamed by the opposition which had been made to his power; but after his return to Medina, after a considerable space had elapsed, and given time for his resentment to cool, and for the feelings of humanity to exert their influence in his breast. See A-bu'l Feda, p. 79."

"The Deity is afterwards introduced in the Koran, giving the sanction of his approbation to this disgraceful act of savage barbarity.—"A part of them ye slew, and a part of them ye made captives; and God hath caused you to inherit their land, and their houses, and their wealth." Chap. xxxiii. Notes on the Bamp. Lect. p. 33.

mountable objections to the authority of the Prophet, as well as to the sanctity of the oracle.

HENCE,

The conduct of Mahomet in his wars has been insidiously compared with that of Moses and Samuel; and it has been argued, that the first might with as much reason alledge the divine sanction for his proceedings as the latter could for theirs. I confess that my memory does not supply an instance from the History of the Wars of the Israelites, which deserves to be at all compared with this deliberate and useless act of cruelty. This however is not the place for discussing the question fully *. I shall therefore content myself with one or two general remarks. Not to insist upon other points of comparison manifestly in favour of Moses, it must be remembered, that the law was dispensed nearly 1500 years *before* Christ; and after every deduction which ignorance or prejudice can make, it certainly contained a system of morals and religion far superior to any, with which the world had then had an opportunity of becoming acquainted. The pretended mission of Mahomet took place 600 years *after* Christ, and both in theory and practice was greatly inferior to the moral and religious code, which had been so long published to the world.

The law of Moses is not represented in Scripture as being perfect, or of unlimited duration †: but it is spoken of as preparatory to a more excellent system, which was to be revealed in after ages.—Still a candid inquirer will allow it to have been most wisely and most kindly adapted to the state, in which mankind were at the time, when it was dispensed. The law of Mahomet on the contrary did avowedly profess to be perfect; but certainly, although it introduced some local improvements, and taught the important truth of the unity of God, (which however was borrowed) yet in other respects it cannot claim any decided superiority over many human institutions; those of Athens or Rome for instance; still less can it realize it's pretensions as a divine revelation, posterior, and therefore superior to the law of Jesus Christ.

* On this subject see Lettres de quelques Juifs Portugais, &c.
à M. De Voltaire, Part. iv. Lett. 11. Sect. 4.

† Ezek. xx. 25. Galat. iii. 19. iv. 9. Heb. x. 1. See also Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. book II. chap. VII.

HENCE, in addition to the blow given to the pretensions of the Koran, the character of it's Author is degraded and destroyed. Since, instead of setting a fair example of conformity to his own precepts, favourable as they were to the indulgence of the passions, we find, that he openly set up a claim of exemption from the laws, which he pretended a divine commission to deliver:— a species of conduct, which at once tears off the mask from the impostor, and strips him of all pretence to veracity.

BESIDES these internal defects, we might urge, if necessary, the deficiency of external proof for it's authenticity. It is allowed by the Mahometans that the Koran was never made public in it's present form by their Prophet; but that it was collected and published by his friend and successor, Abu-beker, and was afterwards revised by the Caliph Othman in the thirtieth year of the Hegira *. As in these publications reference was had to those followers, who had treasured in their memories such parcels of the divine book as were mislaid, and as it is allowed that the succeeding Editors sent it into

* See Gibbon, p. 208. Sale, 64, 65. Prideaux, 16, 17.

into the world without any regard to the order of time in which the chapters were revealed ; it is obvious to remark how suspicious the authenticity of the Koran is become. It is however a source of never-failing consolation to the faithful Musulman, "that the various editions of the Koran assert the same miraculous privilege of an uniform and incorruptible text*." Indeed the question of authenticity extends itself to all the facts related of Mahomet and the origin of his religion ; and places the evidence for similar facts relating to Christian antiquity in a strong point of view. Gibbon, who is certainly entitled to the praise of sparing no pains to collect the earliest and most authentic materials, is compelled to follow, as his principal authorities, Abulfeda "an enlightened Prince" of the fourteenth, and Al Jannabi, "a credulous Doctor," of the sixteenth century. Indeed he fairly allows, that " both Abulfeda and Al Jannabi are modern historians, and that they cannot appeal to any writers of the first century of the Hegira †."

It is impossible to close this account of the doctrines and conduct of the celebrated Impostor,

* Gibbon ubi suprà.

† See note in page 220.

Impostor, without remarking the fatal and decisive evidence which the circumstances of his death supply, in direct contradiction to his pretensions. A Jewish female of Chai-bar, being desirous to ascertain the truth of these pretensions, placed before him at supper a poisoned dish, of which one of his companions, eating greedily, immediately died. The pretended Prophet, who partook of it in less abundance, nevertheless only found his fate deferred. His health was so much injured by this successful essay of curiosity and revenge, that, after languishing three years, he died in consequence of thus failing to realize his claim to that prophetic knowledge, which he so arrogantly asserted. These facts, which are confessed by his warmest admirers*, surely place in the clearest point of view the fallacy of his declarations; and expose that imposture, which he had been labouring but too successfully to place beyond the reach of human discernment.

If therefore we fairly consider the circumstances under which the religion of Mahomet prospered, taking into account the

* See the authorities cited by Gibbon, p. 246. and by Prideaux, pp. 94—101.

the manner in which it was propagated, and the form it continues to assume, surely it does not appear, that any argument can be derived from it's success, to affect in the slightest degree the Christian religion ; but as certainly it does appear, that an Impostor of the most acknowledged abilities and the most undaunted courage, undertaking his designs at a juncture the most favourable, could not plan a scheme of such a nature and extent, without betraying tokens of fraud the most gross and palpable ; nor without laying himself open to the view of all, who unite a spirit of candour with a desire of accurate investigation.

CHRISTIANITY appeared in a most enlightened age ; it has attracted the notice, and challenged the scrutiny, of the acute and intelligent ; yet in the space of eighteen centuries, no one decisive mark of fraud has been fixed upon as affecting the conduct or doctrines of it's founder. On the contrary, the more accurate the search, and the more piercing the scrutiny, into it's authority, the characters of truth have appeared with undiminished, nay, increased, lustre.

IF the revolution of so many ages has failed to reveal one indubitable trace of falacy

lacy in the origin of our Holy religion ; if the labours of so many intellects have been baffled in the attempt to stigmatize it as indebted to fraud or enthusiasm for it's success, is it probable that a few more ages rolling on shall unfold the hitherto undiscovered secret of it's human birth ? Are the sages yet unborn, who shall probe to the quick the latent wound, which has so long rankled, without betraying one symptom of unsoundness ?

UNTIL such exalted spirits shall appear, and such wondrous ages arrive, why may we not content ourselves with believing that, which is so far from having been proved incredible, that it has on the contrary been found to possess all the marks of credibility, which in any similar question the human understanding can require ?

SURELY, in the religion of Jesus, there is sufficient evidence to warrant our faith, sufficient authority to regulate our conduct, and sufficient encouragement to elevate and sustain our hope.



L. B.

QUE sequuntur orationes coram Academiâ Cantabrigiensi sunt habitæ; una quidem in Scholis Theologicis*, altera verò in Templo Beatæ Mariæ †; priusquam Baccalaureatus in Theologiâ gradum suscepimus. Quum eas pronunciasssem, impensè à me petebant nonnulli ex amicis meis, ut eas prælo subjicerem. Horum igitur sive benevolentiae in me singulari, sive in litteras humaniores studio honestissimo ut obsecundarem, h̄ic eas excudendas curavi: eoque libentiū id feci, quod materies earum cum cæteris rebus, quæ in hoc libello continentur, apertissimè cohæreat. Nimirūm, quæ h̄ic leguntur, scripta à me sunt omnia uno eodemque consilio, ut pro virili ostenderem Revelatam Religionem unicè dignam videri, quam boni cordatique homines pleno assensu approbent, summāque reverentiâ prosequantur. De laude autem vel doctrinæ, quæ exquisitior sit, vel sermonis, qui luminibus verborum distinguatur, non ita sollicitus sum, modò diligentia mea, atque animus in veritatem propensus, candidis reruin æstimatoribus se probaverint.

VALE, L. B. et meas hasce, qualescunque sunt, in pietate promovendâ curas, æqui et boni facias.

T H E S I S

* IX. Calend. Mart. A.D. 1799.

† IV. Non. Novemb. A.D. 1799.

A A A

THESES, &c.

NEQUIT per se humana ratio, cognitione satis plenâ et certâ asequi, quo potissimum modo Deus sit colendus, quæ sint hominum officia, vita denique futura sit, nécne, æterna.

Si quis, veterum Philosophorum in explorandis morum ac religionis principiis cùm diligentiam solitudinemque, tùm ignorantiam in plerisque et inconstantiam*, secum reputaverit, operæ eum ab illis frustrà impensæ necesse est miserescat. Spem autem à nonnullis eorum conceptam †, fore aliquando, ut plenam consiliorum suorum cognitionem Deus hominibus concederet, quotus est quisque qui non exoptet felicem exitum habuisse? Merito etiam sibi colligere quispiam videretur, cùm in hisce quæftionibus

* “Jam de Platonis inconstantiâ longum est dicere; qui in Timæo patrem hujus mundi nominari neget posse, in legum autem libris quid sit omnino Deus, anquiri oportere non censeat.” Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1. sect. 12.

Qui Platonis patrocinium suscipere volunt, ad distinctionem inter disciplinam ejus esotericam, ut aiunt, et exotericam confugient.

† Vide omnino Platonem in Alcibiade IIdo. ad finem.

stionibus veritatem Deus patefecisset, tum demum neminem futurum esse, qui tale tantumque munus non arriperet, gratoque animo ejus auctori acceptum redderet.

ALITER se rem habere, ac ratio et aequitas postulaverint, id vero magnopere dolendum est. Tantum enim abest, ut omnes qui ope revelationis frui possint, vel muneris ipsius quod sit pretium, vel fontem, unde profluxerit, confiteri velint, ut istorum, qui se philosophos profiteantur, alii saluberrima pietatis principia audacter convellant; alii vera quidem et utilia esse agnoscant, sed e suorum ingeniorum penu affatim deprompta esse contendant. Revelatae autem religionis quam maximè interest, cum illorum dementiam refrænari, tum refelli ac redargui horum pertinaciam. Etenim si præcepta ejus neque fana neque utilia sint, jure optimo ea penitus aspernaremur. Sin istiusmodi sint, ut homines suis viribus freti pleraque eorum indagare potuerint, multum certè utilitatis auctoritatisque sacris scripturis decedet.—Quamobrem in id potissimum operam dabo, ut ostendam humanam rationem, ò suis tantummodo opibus fisam, nunquam attigisse rerum ad nos maximè pertinentium eam cognitionem, per quam

solam, et nunc, et in æternum verè felices esse possimus. Sunt autem illæ res arctissimo vinculo inter se conjunctæ; quippe quæ ad Dei cultum, ad hominum inter homines societate devinctorum officia, et ad vitæ spem futuræ pertineant.

HAUD me fugit, argumenta hæc mea quibusdam philosophis videri, non solum à vero, sed à consuetudine sensus communis, prorsus abhorriere. Evidem ab istis acutulis et minutulis disputatoribus me contemni haud ægrè tulerim. Id verò in primis mihi cavendum est, ne fortè inter ipsos revelatæ religionis patronos reperiantur, qui me velle rationis nostræ viribus nimium quantum detrahere suspicentur. Pace igitur horum virorum dixerim, me non ignarum esse, ad quantas res obeundas mens humana sit idonea; quot et quales in artibus, vel ad usum vitæ, vel ad elegantiam necessariis, fecerit progressus; quam sit felicitè versata in omni scientiâ, quæ in rerum externarum proprietatibus investigandis occupetur. Neutquam id ausim denegare in spatiis hujus Academiæ, quæ non modò in sinu suo foverit Baconum et Newtonum, verùm etiam juvenes præstantissimos quotidiè alat, qui leges, à quibus pendeat univerfus orbis, accurate

accuratè investigent, solisque ipsius magnitudinem, siderum cursus, et lucis velocitatem dimetiri soleant. Sed, ut mihi videtur, jam indè a primâ mundi origine mentis humanæ vires certo quodam limite contentæ sunt ac definitæ. Scilicet quæcunque sub sensuum, qui vocantur, cognitionem cadant, aut analogiâ quâdam ad ea pertinere videantur, quocunque animus in se conversus de origine et coniunctione idearum sibimet patefacere possit, ea sunt omnia intellectûs humani proprium quoddam aucupium et pabulum saluberrimum. At verò quæ sensuum istorum captum omnino fugiant, neque cum rebus, in quibus percipiendis versantur, nexæ et jugatæ sint, neque ad motus animi, cùm se complectatur, ullo modo pertineant, ea crediderim diu in tenebris Deum abdidisse, donec revelatæ lux religionis faustè atque auspiciatò mortalibus affulisset.

UT ut hæc sunt, (neque enim conjecturæ ausim in re tantâ vel minimum concedere) historiâ usus duce, rem ad examen revocaverim. Fuit profectò tempus, cùm homines à summâ rerum scientiâ instruëti, maximoque ingenii acumine præditi, vires suas omnes ad contemplationem $\tauῶν θεῶν$ dirigerent, Græci scilicet Romanique scriptores

tores per multa sæcula in id incubuerunt, ut, quod sit summum bonum, quæ deorum ipsorum natura, vitæ humanæ qui sit finis, intelligerent. Horum igitur operibus diligenter excussis, dubium non est quin id, quod in hujusmodi quæstionibus ratio efficere per se possit, pro explorato habeatur.

SED priusquam de rebus singulis seriatim differamus, perquām utile erit præmonere, magnum quoddam discrimen interesse eas inter res, quas vi suapte ratio humana assequi possit, et eas, quas, cum aliundè patefactæ sint, suffragio suo comprobaverit. Enimverò perpauci sunt, quibus contigerit ea, quæ de mundi opificio Newtonus, aut de mente humanâ Lockius repererit, meditando extundere. At reperta et in lucem prolata quotus est quisque qui non intelligat, et pro verissimis habeat?—Neque illud silentio prætereundum est, Deum (quæ est ejus benevolentia) homines non passum esse omnino incios errare, utrum aliquod numen existat, aut quænam debeant, vel ad favorem ejus conciliandum, vel ad iram avertendam, officia præstari. Historia, tūm sacra, tūm profana, argumento esse poterit, multa illum quæ ad vitam rectè agendam spectent, hominibus ab ipsis rerum cunabulis revelâsse *. Verisimile est porrò, postea quām Deus humanum genus

genus nequitiæ deditum gravi exitio demersisset, pleniùs eadem illum communicavisse Noacho, à quo per totum orbem terrarum præcipua religionis et morum capita innovoscerent. Testes sunt de hâc re non modò illi, quos appellavimus, sacri annales, verùm etiam rerum humanarum historia; siquidem quo eam altiùs repetamus, eò in saniora principia religionis omni ex parte incidimus. Nimirùm quicquid inter Philosophorum deliramenta et commenta Sacerdotum à vero propriùs abest, id omne opinionibus famâ divulgatis, et ab ævo longè antiquiore traditis, profluxisse credibile est.

QUONIAM autem nonnulli religionis revelatæ fautores de limitibus, intra quos humana ratio circumscripta sit, nonnihil inter se discrepârunt, nolim equidem in rē tantâ quidquam incerti relinquere. Videor itaque mihi tutam omnino et facilem viam iniisse, cùm partes illas, de quibus anteà dixi, mihi expendendas proposuerim. Graves sunt illæ quidem, et in primis tūm ad contemplandum jucundæ, tūm ad rectè vivendum necessariæ. Positis igitur, quibus insistere velim, fundamentis, suo quamque ordine rem exsequar.

QUOD ad primam attinet, pro certissimo habendum

* Vid. Leland: de Utilitate et Necessitate Christianæ Religionis, part I. capp. 1, 2. Part. III. c. 2.

habendum est, oportere, priusquam Deum
 ritè et aptè colere possimus, fixum ratum
 que in animo nos tenere, utrum omnino sit
 Deus, qualis sit, atque adeò cujusmodi sit ea
 necessitudo, quæ inter ipsum et homines
 intercedat. Dato enim re verâ esse Deum,
 neutiquam idcirco comparebit cætera ad
 eum pertinentia posse nos reperire. Inde
 factum est ut permulti dubitaverint, an
 numen, tam immenso intervallo à mortali-
 bus dissumum, ullâ eos curâ dignaretur? An
 preces, quas nunquam postulâsse, et vota
 eorum accepturus esset? An homines ei, qui
 omnino omnia cognoverit, suas quisque
 ærumnas, suos errores, sua peccata longâ
 verborum serie aperire deberent? An veri rec-
 tique ratio pateretur, ut ab eo, qui suâ sponte
 cum universo genere humano optimè actum
 esse statuisse, opem quispiam aut solatium
 peteret?—Cultus igitur ullus Deo sit, nécne,
 præstandus, perdifficilis visa est Philosophis
 benè multis et perobscura quæstio. Qualis
 porrò cultus est is, qui præstari debet? Is,
 credo, quem potissimum illi placitum esse
 arbitremur. At quâ tandem viâ ad numi-
 nis de hâc re voluntatem homo pervenerit?
 Me quidem fateor nescire, quo se modo in
 re tam gravi tamque reconditâ ratio humana
 expediverit. Deo quæ maximè placeant, Dei
 est

est, nî fallor, folius cumulatè et apertè demonstrare. Hoc autem posito, nihil est cur miremur homines, ratione tantummodo usos, à recto tramite sæpiissimè aberravisse.

DISSERENS de eo, quod opinione et famâ hominum inveterascit, Cicero statuit inter probabilia, “eos, qui philosophiæ dent operam, non arbitrari Deos esse*.” Hoc quâm latè pateat in Democriti et Epicuri asseclas, nemo est qui ignoret. Illud interea constat, homines, et si cogitationibus suis reperissent esse quandam vim divinam, à quâ ortum ipsi duxissent, de naturâ tamen illius dubios hæsisse. Præterea, unum esse Deum ne somniâsse quidem videntur. Contrà ea, quot essent Dii, quantum inter se discrepârint, ubinam degerint, ullâne, an maximâ, curâ respexerint mortales, hisce de rebus anxiè semper disputatum est. Profectò nihil est tam ineptum aut pravum, quod non unus et alter ex antiquis Philosophis de naturâ Deorum excogitaverit.

DATO autem priùs oportere de ipso Deo rectè nos sentire, quâm definiri possit modus quo sit colendus, simile est vero homines, nullâ revelationis notitiâ imbutos, alias cultus

* De Invent. Lib. I. p. 68. Edit. Gruter.

cultus quām illum, qui sanus esset, approbāsse *. Deos si finxissent, aut nullam de rebus humanis curam impendere, aut malignos esse, vel discordes, vel lascivos, fieri non potuit, quin omnem cultum negligerent, aut ad eum, qui esset futilis et deformis, confugerent. Quid est, quod vel ritus impuros Veneris commemorem, vel Bacchi orgia scelerata et furiosa †? Estne provocandum ad sacerdotes Matris Deorum, an ad Flamines Martiales, an ad Panis Lupercalia? Scilicet mirificum quiddam et pulcerimum esse debebat pietas eorum, qui numinis iram censuerint tum denique posse placari efficacissimè, cùm super altaria illius effunderetur plurimum sanguinis humani ‡.

PUDET

* Καὶ τὰ περὶ εὐτελείας δὲ καὶ θεῶν πεπλήρωται τολλῆς διαφωνίας. Θεός γάρ οἱ μὲν τολλοί φασιν ἔιναι, τιὲς δὲ, ὡς ἔιναι. * * * καὶ τῶν εἶναι θεός ἀποφηναμένων, οἱ μὲν τὰς πατρίες νομίζουσι θεός· οἱ δὲ, τὰς ἐν ταῖς δογματικαῖς αἰρέσεσις ἀναπλασσομένως. * * Καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν Βίον, οἱ μὲν ἔνος φασιν ἔιναι Θεόν, οἱ δὲ τολλῆς καὶ διαφόρους ταῖς μορφαῖς, ὡς καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν Ἀιγυπτίων ὑπολήψεις ἐκπίπτειν, κυνοπροσώπους, καὶ iεραχομόρφους, καὶ βοας, καὶ κροκοδείλους, καὶ τι γάρ θάξαριζόντων τὰς Θεός; θέεν καὶ τὰ περὶ θυσιῶν, καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰς θεός; θρησκείας ὅλως τολλὴν ἀνωμαλίαν ἔχει. Sexti Empirici Hypotyp. Lib. III. pag. 155. Edit. Genev.

† Vid. Ovid. Metam. Lib. iii. 532. xi. 15, &c. Eurip. Bacch. paſſim.

‡ Vid. Jenkin. de Rationalitat. et Certitud. Religionis Christianæ Tom. I. p. 339. Edit. 3a. et commentarium viri doctissimi Jacobi Bryant de ἀνθρωποθυσίᾳ καὶ τεκνοθυσίᾳ. Pag. 267. Observations and Inquiries, 4to. 1767.

PUDET mehercule pigētque me diutiūs referre, quām turpiter ratione abusi sint isti pietatis magistri, et quām fœdè vulgus credulum ac delirum ludificati. Libet potiūs Philosophi cujusdam insignis verba laudare, ut evincam plerasque veterum de Diis sententias esse à vero longè alienas. “Exposui ferè (inquit Cicero) non philosophorum judicia, sed delirantium somnia: nec enim multo absurdiora sunt ea, quæ poëtarum vocibus fusa, ipsâ suavitate nocuerunt: qui et irâ inflammatos, et libidine furentes induxerunt Deos: fecerūntque, ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnera videremus; odia præterea, dissidia, discordias, ortus, interitus, querelas, lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantiâ libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus, mortalésque ex immortali procreatos. Cum poëtarum autem errore conjungere licet portenta magorum, Ægyptiorūmque in eodem genere dementiā: tum etiam vulgi opinones, quæ in maximâ inconstantiâ, veritatis ignoratione versantur*.”

ATQUI submurmurabunt religionis naturalis fautores insulsis hisce et portentofisis opinionibus

* De Nat. Deor. Lib. I. seft. 16. Edit. Ernesti.

opinionibus nescio quid *reconditi* subestè, quòd, cùm exploratūm fuerit, ad veritatēm propriūs accesserit.—Operam credo atque oleum omnes perdidisse, qui per hæc involucra et integumenta se perspicere aliquid veri posse jactaverint. Monitos intereà illud volo Philosophorum patronos, et si altum quiddam atque excelsum ipsi philosophi nonunquam saperent, plebeculam tamen fœdissimè delirare. Nimirūm apud vulgus ea fuit de Diis opinio, quam fabellæ poëtarum et mythologorum nugæ subministrarent. Quod autem ad cultum Deorum attinet, unus apud omnes sermo increbuit, Deos patrios esse pro more patrio colendos. Qui decantatum illud Pythagoræ præcep-
tum legerit,

*'Αθανάτες μὲν ἀρωταὶ θεός, νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται,
Τίμα,*

probè is cognoverit, quid de totâ re uno ore omnes philosophantium familiæ statuerint. Immò Socrates, quem Philosophorum omnium facile principem esse confitebor, eandem, quam cæteri de hoc grege, opinionem semper præ se tulit. Nam, quod objecerint ejus accusatores, cum in rébus ad cultum Deorum pertinentibus novi aliquid docuisse,

docuisse, id quidem de se dictum esse indignè passus est, et tanquam gravissimum opprobrium acerrimè repulit.

DEORUM profectò cultus tūm inter Græcos tūm Romanos mihi semper visus est ad πολίτειαν tantummodò pertinere. Liquidò patet et Athenis et Romæ civiles magistratus rebus sacrīs administrandis præfuisse; id quod antiquissimis etiam temporibus factitatum legimus, cùm esset

REX Anius, rex idem hominum, Phœbique sacerdos*.

Quantūm igitur Religio illa, quæ à metu orta est, et plerumque in meris cæremoniis posita, valere putabatur in rebus politicis †, tanti à Philosophis et Magistratibus æstimabatur. At verò Pietas ea, quæ castos homines, probosque, et benevolos reddit; quæ ad res cœlestes contemplandas animum incitat erigitque; quæ denique ad Deum ἐν πνέυματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ* venerandum instituit nos atque instruit,

* Virg. Æn. III. 80.

† Ἐνοι τοίνυν ἔφασαν τὰς πρεώτας τῶν ἀνθρώπων προσάντας, καὶ τὸ σύμφερον τῷ βίῳ σκεψαμένας, τάνυ συνετὰς ὄντας, ἀναπλάσας τὴν περὶ τε τὰν θεῶν ὑπόνοιαν, καὶ τὴν περὶ τῶν ἐν ἀδε μυθευομένην δόξαν. * * * ἐπισχεῖν βιλόμενος τὰς ἀδικεντας, πρεώτοι μὲν νόμους ἔθιντο πρὸς τὸ τὰς φανερῶς ἀδικεντας κολάζεσθαι. μετὰ δὲ τῦτο, καὶ θεὺς αἰέπλασαν ἐπόπτας πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀμαρτημάτων τε καὶ κατορθωμάτων. Sexti Empirici adv. Mathematicos, pp. 310, 311. Edit. Gen.

* Joh. iv. 24.

instruit, de hâc fanè vix aut ne vix quidem cogitâsse videntur aut ii, penes quos erat publica cultûs divini ratio, aut ii, qui Philosophiam, quasi optimarum rerum cognitionem, excolebant. Quòd si Græci Romanique in re tantâ cæcutiverint, supervacaneum esset ad alias gentes respicere. Enimverò humana ista sacrificia, quæ sunt à Septentrionalibus populis frequentata, Solis atquè ignis cultus qui in Oriente increbuit passim atque invaluit, prava denique illa et periculosa de duobus æquè potentibus boni et mali auctoribus opinio, hæc, inquam, omnia exemplo esse possunt, quantulum ratio humana perfecerit in religione, vel quâ obscura sit, illustrandâ, vel quâ depravata fuerit, corrigendâ.

DE parte nostræ quæstionis primâ hæc sufficient.—Ad amissim igitur ea exigamus, quæ dē hominum inter homines societate devinctorum officiis mens humana, suis tantummodò viribus freta, compererit.

ERUNT fortassè qui satis causæ esse putent, cur in rebus ab intelligentiâ nostrâ remotissimis vacillet animus et aliquantulùm titubet; contendant tamen, vi suâpte eum posse legem aliquam morum et vivendi normam non solùm percipere, sed et invenire. Equidem

dem non is sum, qui diffitear veterum quo-
 rundam scripta Ethica acri judicio esse maxi-
 máque diligentia elaborata. Pari autem
 jure contenderim, plurima eorum esse flos-
 culis sententiarum conspersa, et aureo quo-
 dam flumine eloquentiae se legentibus
 probare. Multa in illis videntur requiri ad
 plenam solidamque officiorum effigiem ex-
 primendam. Illa porrò ipsa, quæ ad Deum
 pertinent, officia permagnam habent cum
 virtutibus ferè omnibus necessitudinem.
 Unde factum est, ut, qui in deorum cultu
 gravissimè erraverint, sapientiam in rebus
 civilibus absolutam et perfectam non at-
 tigerint. Etenim si multi sint Dii, id quod
 plerique veterum existimabant, morum pro-
 fectò regulam mutari oportet, prout rectè
 de iis aut pravè suo quisque animo conce-
 perit.—Si diversos et inter se discordes Deos
 fingamus, diversa necesse est intérque se
 discordia officia sint in Eos præstanta.—Si
 imbecillos putemus esse desiderisque, qui nec
 capiantur benè promeritis, neque irâ tan-
 gantur, scelestissimus quisque et integerri-
 mus pariter fuerit eorum securus. Missis
 autem vitæ futuræ cùm præmiis, tūm
 pœnis, quæ à Deorum justitiâ pendeant,
 fieri

fieri non potest quin multæ sint virtutes tantum inchoatæ imperfectæque, multaque vitia radices suas altius agant. Veteres cum Philosophos, tum legum latores, aliquâ ex parte laudandos esse lubens agnosco. Civem quæ faciunt patriæ idoneum et urbi utilem, ea fermè omnia sunt in legum tabulis et in libris sapientium aptè descripta. Profectò, cum ratione, tum ipsâ necessitate quodammodo duce, homines cavebant, ne vinculum societatis dissolveretur: cavebant, ne funditus tolleretur respublica: cavebant, ne malorum hominum audacia et furor in vitam fortunásque civium impunitate et licentiâ sempiternâ impetum faceret. Verum enimverò in hâc ipsâ officiorum parte multa sunt, quæ æquus prudensque rerum æstimator desideraverit. Athenienses, apud quos genera doctrinarum ferè omnia vel reperta sunt vel perfecta, ipsum nomen hominis in gyrum nimis arctum contrahebant. Qui τὸ ἐλληνικὸν summis laudibus efferebant, iidem τὸ βάρβαρον contemptu atque odio prosequabantur*.

MORIS est multis plenâ manu plaudere
Comici hæc verba:

HOMO

* Vid. Plat. de Rep. Lib. V. ap. Lel. Tom. II. p. 122.

Homo sum, humani nihil à me alienum puto.

Quæ tamen sententia viro cuidam doctissimo* non Philosophiæ gravitatem, sed personæ significationem, continere, atque adeò ad risum captandum efficta esse videbatur. Quicquid autem de argumentis ejus statuerimus, neminem credo inter Ethnicos existisse, qui “non sibi, sed toti mundo se genitum crediderit.”

UNUS fortè atque alter reperiri potest, qui de caritate totius generis humani splendidè et compositè differuerit. Atqui benevolentiam, quâ omnes complexi sint, cancellis vel Eloquentiæ vel Philosophiæ circumscriptam esse, tûm captivorum cædes, tûm servitorum acerbissima conditio, cumulatissimè docent. Quis tandem est, cuius in mentem non subeat inhumana illa atque effera, et apud omnes ferè gentes non modò usu comprobata, verùm etiam legibus sancita, infantes exponendi consuetudo? Quem porrò non indignatione atque horrore percellunt belluina ista Amphitheatri spectacula, in quibus homines sunt, inter lætitiam et plausus hominum, fœdissimè trucidati?

JAM

* Vid. Hurd. De Muneribus Dramat. ad fin. Commentar. in Epist. ad Augustum. Tom. II. p. 200. Vid. etiam Warburton. de Div. Legat. Mosis, Lib. I. sect. 4. apud Leland. Tom. II. p. 59.

JAM verò quod attinet ad animi affectus, quos actionum humanarum fontes esse nemo non intelligit, annon constat ultionem ab ipsis morum informatoribus * non solido, sed splendido, nomine virtutis esse honestatam? E contrario, demissum animum humilémque, contumeliarum et injuriarum patientissimum, hunc, inquam, etiamsi laudabilis est naturâ, pauci fuerunt qui laudaverint. Nimirùm quicquid utile videbatur, id speciem honesti obscurabat, animosque omnium suâ sponte commovebat. Pro patriâ autem vel amicis dolos instruere, aut iis, quos in hostium numero ponerent, quo jure, quâve injuriâ, vim inferre, id verò pulcerrimum facinus existimabatur.

IN officiis, quæ sibi quisque præstare debet, designandis, infelicius quiddam ratio humana perpesta est, siquidem hisce in rebus regulam, quæ sibi maximè placuerit, suis quisque actionibus imposuit; et quod à se, arbitris remotis, fuerit peccatum, id

Deos

* Φίλοις εὐνόει. ἔχθροις ἀμύνει. Verba sunt Sofiadis in Concilio Sept. Sapient. Vide Stobæum in Sermone tertio. Tom. I. p. 47.

Εἴναι δὲ γλυκὺν ὡδὲ φίλοις, ἔχθροῖσι δὲ πικρόν.
Τοῖσι μὲν αἰδοῖσι, τοῖσι δὲ δεινὸν ἴδειν.

Solon. Vid. Brunck. Anal. Tom. I. p. 65.

Vide Jenkin. de Rat. et Cert. Relig. Christ. Tom. I. p. 349. et Leland. de Util. et Necess. Tom. II. p. 123.

Deos perinde atque homines fallere opinabatur. Itaque ergo incerti de vitâ futurâ aut pravè de consiliis Deorum sentientes, non secretò, sed apertè ac palam dictitabant, φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν· αὐτοις γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν*.

Hic de causis, præceps via et lubrica fuit in omne lasciviarum ac libidinum genus; neque enim à verecundo Christiano nominari possunt, quæ in scholis quibusdam Philosophorum, tanquam in officinis nequitiae, non modò sunt ad disputandum, verùm etiam ad vivendum proposita. Ipsum quidem Platonem auctorem habemus, licere cuivis in Bacchanalibus usque ad ebrietatem bibere†. Accepimus etiam de Catone noctes eum solere vino producere‡; et de juvene, qui ad lupanar descendisset, verbis disertis pronunciâsse, “Macte esto virtute||.”

INTER Græcos vigebat Philosophia, cùm fabulas vel spurcissimas magnâ cum laude

Aristo-

* 1 Cor. xv. 32. Ἐπεὶ δὲ τῆς συνσίησι τοῖσι ἴνδαιμοσι, αὐτέων, ἐπεὰν ἀπὸ δείπνη γένωται, τερψέρει ἀνὴρ τεχὸν ἐν σοφῷ ξέλινον πεποιημένον, μεμιημένον ἐσ τα μαλισκα καὶ γραφῆ καὶ ἔγω μέγαθος ὅσον τε πάντη πηχυάιον, η δίπτυχυν· δεικνὺς δὲ ἵκαστῳ τῶν συμποτέων, λέγει, “Ἐξ τέτον ὄρέων, πᾶντες τα καὶ τέρπειν· ἐσεις γὰρ ἀποθανὼτ τοιετοι.” ταῦτα μὲν παρὰ τὰ συμπόσια ποιεῦσι. Herodot. Lib. II. 78. Idem etiam aliis gentibus moris fuisse docent Plutarchus in Conviv. Sapient. Tom. II. p. 148. Edit. Xyl. et Petron. 34.

† Diog. Laert. in Vitâ Platonis.

‡ Plin. Epist. III. 12.

|| Horat. Sat. I. 2. 31.

Aristophanes doceret. Summè omnium doctrinarum studiosi fuerunt Romani, eo tempore, quo Catullus dicere non erubuit, “versiculos nec castos nec pios esse oportere.” “Horret animus meminisse” turpitudinem rerum et verborum fœditatem, quæ ostendunt Martialem et Petronium “Romani moris pudore” penitus caruisse. Atqui “silentio is verecundiam *non* vindicaverit,” qui de Stoicorum immanitate siluerit; siquidem notissimum est, hosce vehementes et atroces Virtutis magistros multis argutolis et captiunculis contendisse, “nuda rerum nomina haud vitanda esse,” “nihil esse turpe dictu,” “flagitium obscenitatis nullum unquam inesse, neque in rebus, neque verbis*.”

Quid sit *καλοκἀγαθον*, nonnulli Philosophorum videntur probè perspexisse, et pulcerrimis descriptissime lineamentis et coloribus. Verùm enimverò, à quibus illud principiis criatur, ratione et viâ rarò docuerunt. Graviter porrò ab iis peccatum est, quòd ἐν τῇ *καλοκἀγαθίᾳ* explicandâ verbis usi sunt à communi hominum intelligentiâ alienissimis; ut parùm, vel ad virtutem illustrandam, vel ad

* Vid. Cic. De Offic. Lib. I. sect. 55. Epist. ad Famil. Lib. IX. 22. Edit. Ernest. et Quintilian. Institut. Orat. Lib. VIII. Cap. 3.

ad bonos mores promovendos, scripta eorum vel exquisitissima contulerint. Memoriā etiam tenendum est, Philosophi uniuscujusque auctoritatem eatenūs valuisse, quatenūs aut argumenta ejus aliquid acuminis aut sermo suavitatem habere videretur. Quòd si unus aliquis ex barbatis illis de officiis hominum vel optimè locutus esset, aliis autem quæ faciliora essent ad agendum, vel ad audiendum gratiora proposuisset, hunc magna pars hominum nunquam non sequebantur, illum tantummodò laudabant. Qui Philosophiam cum eloquentiā conjunxerat, erat sanè, ubi is aures, quarum est judicium superbissimum, delinire et titillare potuerat. Qui autem virtutem malè defendendo prodidit, ejus demùm sermo in ima auditorum præcordia descendebat. Hâc de causâ, si qui gloriolam aucupabantur Philosophi, ad Rhetorum artes pernicioſas configiebant, sēque tum planè dignos, qui primas ferrent, judicabant, cùm plebeculæ *πρὸς χάριν ἐδημηγόρευ*. Profectò si indomitis atque effrænatis cupiditatibus nihil nisi mellitos verborum globulos opposueris, vix aut ne vix quidem unum inveneris Polemonem,

Potus ut ille

Dicitur ex collo furtim carpfisse coronas,
Postquam est impransi correptus voce magistri*.

Quoniam

* Hor. Sat. Lib. II. 3. 255.

Quoniam igitur officiorum, quæ ad societatem pertinent, cognitio, tūm a Dei notitiā, tūm à spe vitæ futuræ separari non potest, nisi has fuerit apertè et exploratè animus assequutus, frustrà illam quæsiveris. Honesti formam, si oculis cerneretur, Plato docuit mirabiles sui amores non posse non excitare*. At verò detractâ omni utilitate, et in medio positis quæ naturâ suâ sunt laudabilia, desunt omnia, quibus præsentium voluptatum irritamenta leviora fiant et hebetiora. Ferunt Græcis Pugilibus magistros† solere diu adesse, qui eos certandi artem docerent; et præmium, quod labori responderet, prius esse propositum, quām Agonistæ se ad certamen accingerent.

—Hunc ferè in modum (quæ est nostræ naturæ imbecillitas!) Deus necesse est quasi morum informator nobis adsit, et, tanquam stimulum quendam, mentibus nostris admoveat vitam in cœlis sempiternam. Πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος, πάντα ἐγκρατεύεται. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἐν ἵνα φθαρτὸν σέφανον λάβωσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀφθαρτον‡.

TRAN-

* Cic. de offic. Lib. I. sect. 5. de Fin. II. sect. 16.

† Τὴντείθεν ποικίλα τὰ γυμνάσια ἐπινόσαντες, καὶ διδασκάλους ἐκάστων ἐπισήσαντες, τὸν μέν τινα, πυκτεύειν, τὸν δὲ παγκρατισάζειν διδάσκομεν, ὡς τὰς τε πόνις καρτερεῖν ἐθίζοιντο, καὶ ὅμοιος χωρεῖν ταῖς πληγαῖς, μὴ δὲ ἀποτρέποντο δέει τῶν πραυμάτων. Lucian. de Gynan. Tom. II. p. 286. Edit. Amstel.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

TRANSEAMUS jam ad partem nostræ quæstionis tertiam, in quâ quidem explicandâ mirum est, quantâ caligine se opprimi, quantâ dubitatione impediri et perturbari veterum plerique confiteantur. Quoniam verò sententiæ eorum sunt vel obscuræ vel discordes, quâ potero brevitate, rem omnem expediam.

ANIMAM igitur post mortem haud perituram esse, non planè ad veritatem Philosophis persuasum est; sed ex vetere et populari, quæ apud multas gentes percrebuerat, famâ collectum. Hoc quò pleniùs intelligatur, in primis digna notatu sunt verba hæc Ciceronis: “ Auctoriibus quidem ad istam sententiam uti optimis possumus, quod in omnibus causis et debet, et solet, valere plurimum: et primùm quidem omni antiquitate, quæ quò propriùs aberat ab ortu et divinâ progenie, hòc melius ea fortassè, quæ erant vera, cernebat. Itaque unum illud erat insitum priscis illis, quos cascos appellat Ennius, esse in morte sensum, neque excessu vitae sic deleri hominem, ut funditus interiret*.” Jam quæ Ciceronis opinio est, eadem fuit Philosophorum etiam illorum, qui argumentorum telis, quod in se fuit, animæ immor-

immortalitatem defensitârunt. Socrates igitur in Phædone palam agnoscit se vitæ spem æternæ fovere, ὥσπερ γε πάλαι λέγεται †. Plato etiam, qui cum Socrate assiduissimè vixit, et Socraticarum sententiarum defensor fuit acerrimus, sine ullis verborum ambagibus idem asserit. Πείθεσθαι δὲ γάτως αἰεὶ χρὴ τοῖς παλαιοῖς καὶ νέοις λόγοις, οἱ δὴ μηνύσσοντιν καὶ ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν εἶναι, δικασάς τε ἴσχειν, καὶ τίνειν τὰς μεγίστας τιμωρίας, ὅταν τις ἀπαλλάχῃ τὴν σώματος*. Idem de se confitetur Aristoteles à Plutarchο † laudatus; idem ipse Philosophus Chæronensis ‡; idem denique

* Plat. Op. p. 378. A. Ed. Lugd.

† Plat. Op. p. 716. A.

‡ Διόπειρ, ὁ κράτισε πάντων καὶ μακαριστῶντας, καὶ πρὸς τῷ μακαρίας καὶ εὐδαιμονας εἶναι τοὺς τετελευτηκότας νομίζειν, καὶ τὸ φέυσασθαι τι κατ' αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ βλασφημεῖν, ψὲχοντος, ὡς κατὰ βελτίσσων, ἡγεμοθα, καὶ κρειττόνων ἢδη γεγονότων. Καὶ ταῦθ' γάτως αἴραται καὶ παλαιὰ διατελεῖ νενομισμένα παρέχοντιν, ὅτε τὸ παράπαν ἀδεῖς οἶδεν γάτε τὴν χρόνη τὴν αἴρειν, γάτε τὸν δέντα περιττον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀπειρον αἰώνα τυγχάνεσσι διὰ τέλεις γάτη νενομισμένα. Confolat. ad Apol. Tom. II. p. 115.

|| Εἰ δὲ τῶν παλαιῶν τε ποιητῶν καὶ φιλοσόφων λόγος ἐγίνεται ἀληθής, ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἔχειν, γάτω καὶ τοῖς εὔσεβεσ τῶν μεταπλαξάντων ἐσὶ τις τιμὴ καὶ προεδρία (καθάπερ λέγεται) καὶ χαρᾶς τις ἀποτεταγμένος, ἐν ᾧ διατερίθεστιν αἱ τάτων ψυχαὶ, καλὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχειν σε δεῖ περὶ τὴν μακαρίτην οὐέος σγ, ὅτε τάτοις συγκαταριθμηθεὶς συνέσαι. Plutarch. ib. 120. Hanc citationem, uti et eas, quae proximè antecedunt, Lelando acceptas volo referre. Vid. Partis IIIæ. Caput. 2dum. Operæ pretium fuerit obitèr notare, si Herodoto fides habenda sit, illam de animæ immortalitate opinionem primū apud Ægyptios valuisse. Vid. Lib. II. sect. 123.

que probant antiquissimi omnium gentium,
vel cultarum, vel rudium, annales.

Quicquid igitur in hâc quæstione dictum est à Philosophis probabile et propè verum, à primævis, credo, sæculis ad eos dimanaverat. Atqui hominum, qui non modò in reconditis literis peregrini atque hospites esse debebant, sed rerum ferè omnium, quæ ad civilem vitam spectant, rudes ignarique, horum, inquam, minimè εὐρημα fuit, animas esse sempiternas. Quin argu-
mento est rei ipsius difficultas, non nisi per Deum aliquid posse homines de eâ certò cognoscere. Cognitæ autem ejusdem utilitas persuasum me facit, revelationem de eâ aliquam divinitùs fuisse hominibus conces-
sam. Qui igitur animo diligenter perpen-
derit vel ea, de quibus Philosophi fuerint dubii, vel ea, quæ de ignorantia suâ sæpè sint confessi, vel ea, quæ in scriptis eorum conjecturâ potius quàm argumentis nitî videantur, parùm is in hâc quæstione sol-
vendâ rationem profecisse necesse est agnosc-
cat. Quæ cùm ita sint, fateor me calculum
meum adjicere viro cuidam* doctissimo,
qui affirmat, “Socratem, non persequendo
seriem

* Campbell. de Necessit. Revel. sect. 3. p. 100. et seq.

" seriem ullam idearum aut notionum, quæ
 " in mente alicujus è rerum naturâ vel pro-
 " prietatibus orirentur, quod sit simile vero
 " attigisse. In Phædone enim illum videri
 " iis simillimum, qui fortè fortunâ in verita-
 " tem incidissent, quam tamen quarè am-
 " plexi sint, ipsi sint nescii: diligenter
 " autem et sollicitè quò sententiam suam
 " tueantur, argumenta conquirentes, nihil
 " quod non sit vel obscurum, vel ἀπροσδιόνυσον,
 " in medium proferant." Itaque ergo cùm
 instaret hora, in quâ expectatio vitæ futuræ
 vacillantem Socratis animum et jacentem
 erigere deberet, animadvertisse, quæso, quām
 lentè et, pænè dixerim, frigidè vir ille egre-
 gius in extremâ parte sermonis egerit.
 Άλλα γὰρ οὐδηὶ ὡραὶ ἀπίεναι, ἔμοι μὲν, ἀποθανεμένῳ
 ὑμῖν δὲ, Βιωσομένοις. ὅπότεροι δὲ ημῶν ἔρχονται
 ἐπὶ ἄμεινον ὥραιγμα, ἀδηλον πάντι πλὴν ἢ τῷ
 Θεῷ*.

EQUIDEM Platonem fateor copiâ dicendi
 et gravitate Philosophorum esse principem;
 neque Jovem † negaverim, si Græcè loque-
 retur, sic fuisse locuturum. Rationes etiam,
 quas pro animæ immortalitate attulit, ejus-
 modi sunt, ut laudem mereantur iis à Cice-
 rone datam, "velle eum cæteris, sibi certè
 videri

* Apolog. ad fin. † Cicer. Brut. sect. 31. Edit. Ernest.

videri persuasissime *” In memoriam tamen tenendum est, quales ille Θρυλλέμενος Dialogus fructus ediderit. Etenim Catonem accepimus, perlecto illo, sobrium et potenterum, si quis alius, sui, ruisse in voluntarium interitum.

AT dixerit quispiam, Stoicorum, qui id licere cuivis censuerint †, praeceptis addicatum, Catonem sic de vita deceperisse. Causam vero, quae ita neicitur, idcirco statuerim esse inanem, quod Cleombrotus, cum ab omni aegrimoniâ et dolore vacuus esset, et Socraticis, quos nuperimè legisset, sermonibus madidus, mortem sibi conciverit.

Εἰπας ΗΛΙΕ ΧΑΙΡΕ ΚΛΕΟΜΕΡΟΤΟΣ ὡν μέρακιώτης
 “Ηλατ’ αφ’ ὑψηλῶν τείχεος εἰς Αἴδην,
 οὐδὲν δύτι παθὼν θανάτου κακὸν, αλλὰ πλάτωνος
 “Ἐν, τὸ περὶ ψυχῆς, γράμμα ἀναλεξάμενος ‡.

QUI harum rerum momenta diligenter et serio animo perpenderit, confiteatur necesse est, aut Platonis argumenta, etsi subtilia sint, parum sincera esse, aut à simplicitate et pondere

* Tuscul. Lib. I.

† “Sæpe officium est Sapientis desciscere à vita, cum sit beatissimus, et id opportunè facere possit: quod est convenienter naturæ vivere.”—Cic.

‡ Callimachus. Brunckii Analect. Tom. I. p. 474.

pondere disciplinæ Christianæ quàm longissimè distare.

SINGULORUM de animi immortalitate Philosophorum sententias percurrere infinitus effet et quidem inutilis labor. Detur mihi igitur instar omnium Cicero, qui aliorum opiniones penitus intellexit, accuratèque et exquisitè de iis disputavit. Verba igitur ejus hæc audiamus. “ Ut homunculus unus è multis,” inquit, “ probabilia conjecturâ sequens. Ultrà enim quò progrediar, quàm ut veri videam similia, non habeo *.” Et recensitis aliorum de animâ humanâ ejusque interitu sententiis, illud demùm adjungit. “ Harum sententiarum, quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit. Quæ verisimillima, magna quæstio est †.”

SCITE et compositè, dum in exercitatione umbratili versabatur, Cicero de hâc quæstione differuit. At verò, cùm ad verum ei ventum est, languescere cœpit et infringi, qualiscunque demùm effet, ejus persuasio.— Nullum ei attulit doloris levamentum, nullum ægritudinis remedium, nullum contra mortis timorem solatium. Tulliola illa tantoperè amata cùm ei erepta effet, neque in

* Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I. sect. 9.

† Ibid. sect. 11.

in patris mæstissimi, neque in amici *, qui eum consolabatur, argumentis locus est datus ei opinioni, quæ mortem statuit. “non interitum esse omnia tollentem atque delentem, sed quandam quasi migrationem commutationemque vitæ †.” Næ in oratione corām populo habitâ Cicero ipse, quæ viri inconstantia fuit, nullâ omnino pœnâ apud inferos sceleratissimum hominem affici contendit. “Nam nunc quidem quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? Nisi forte ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur, ut existimemus illum apud inferos impiorum supplicia perferre, ac plures illīc offendisse inimicos quam hīc reliquisse: à socrūs, ab uxorum, à fratriis, à liberūm pœnis actum esse præcipitem in sceleratorum sedem atque regionem. Quæ si falsa sunt, id quod omnes intelligunt, quid ei tandem aliud mors eripuit, præter sensum doloris ‡?”

Verba hæc à sapientissimorum virorum sententiis minimè fuerunt aliena. Fuit enim plerisque eorum persuasissimum, animam,

* Epist. ad Fam. Lib. IV. 5, 6.

† Tusc. Quæst. I. sect. 12.

‡ Pro A. Cluentio. sect. 61. Edit. Ernesti. Cum hisce Ciceronianis conferenda sunt Cæfaris argumenta, quibus in Senatu contendit “mortem cuncta mortalium mala dissolvere; ultrà neque curæ neque gaudio locum esse.” Sallust. Catal. C. LI. Ed. Wasse.

mam, et si post mortem durâisset, nullis esse suppliciis obnoxiam: omnia ea, quæ de Orco dicerentur, Poetarum esse portenta ad plebeculam minaciter et inaniter terrendam aptissima*: Deos, si qui essent, ab irâ esse vacuos;—homines igitur, si revivescerent, omnino omnes futuros esse felices.

PHILOSOPHORUM hæc cantilena nulos potuit fructus afferre, vel ad mores hominum corrigendos, vel ad metus eorum dolorésque relevandos. Multa quidem Stoici de pulcritudine virtutis, déque animi immortalitate versutè ac subtiliter disputabant. In eo tamen gravissimè erraverunt, quòd animam dixerint, quasi particulam quandam à naturâ divinâ primò discerptam esse, atque adeò in eandem debere post mortem refundi. Hoc quām sit à veritate alienum nemo non videt. Multis tamen et acutulis argumentis deliniti, qui à Zenone et Chrysippo stabant, hasce umbras falsæ Philosophiæ consecabantur. “ Vix ulli fuere “ (quæ humanæ mentis caligo et imbecillitas “ est) qui non inciderint in errorem illum de refusione

* Ἐπειδάν τις ἔγγὺς ἦ τῇ οἰσθαι τελευτήσειν, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ δέος καὶ φροντὶς περὶ ὃν ἐμπροσθεν ὑπὲρ εἰσήσκεται. οἱ τε γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν ἀδε, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ διδόναι δίκην, καταγελώμενοι τέως, τότε δὲ τρέφεσσιν αὐτῷ τὴν ψυχὴν, μὴ ἀληθεῖς φέσι. Plat. de Rep. Lib. I. pag. 331. Edit. Serran.

“ refusione in animam mundi. Nimirūm
 “ sicut existimārunt singulorum animas par-
 “ ticulas esse animæ mundanæ, quarum quæ-
 “ libet suo corpore, ut aqua vase, includitur,
 “ ita et reputārunt unamquamque animam,
 “ corpore dissoluto, quasi diffracto vase, ef-
 “ fluere, atque animæ mundi, è quâ deducta
 “ fuerit, iterūm uniri *.”.

Res, nî fallor, hûc redit. Philosophi ple-
 rique omnes, qui in hâc quæstione exami-
 nandâ plurimum vel acuminis vel auctori-
 tatis habuerunt, opiniones suas, à vetusto
 ævo receptas, argumentis sæpè vel infirmis
 vel ineptis defensitabant.

Qui animi immortalitatem vel apertè vel
 cuniculis oppugnabant, *παραδόσεις* illas vene-
 randas, tanquam fabellas et ineptias aniles,
 sapientissimo cuique deridendas, propinabant.
 Gravissimos de eâ re auctores habemus Plini-
 um et Ciceronem. “ Puerilium ista delini-
 “ mentorum avidæque nunquam definere
 “ mortalitatis commenta sunt. . . . Quæ
 “ (malūm) ista dementia est, iterari vitam
 “ morte? quæve genitis quies unquam, si in
 “ sublimi sensus animæ manet, inter inferos
 “ umbræ? Perdit profectò ista dulcedo cre-
 “ dulitásque præcipuum naturæ bonum,
 “ mortem:

• Gassend. apud Leland. Tom. II. p. 303. not.

“ mortem : ac duplicat obitus, si dolere etiam
 “ post futuri aestimatione contigit. Etenim
 “ si dulce vivere est, cui potest esse vixisse?
 “ At quantò facilius certiusque, sibi quem-
 “ que credere, ac specimen securitatis ante-
 “ genitali sumere experimento *.” “ Cater-
 “ væ” (inquit Cicero) “ veniunt contra
 “ dicentum, non solùm Epicureorum, quos
 “ equidem non despicio, sed nescio quo modo
 “ doctissimus quisque contemnit: acerrimè
 “ autem deliciæ meæ, Dicæarchus contra
 “ hanc immortalitatem differuit †.” — Ad
 vulgus quod attinet, fieri non potuit, quin
 in partes diversas inclinaret. Alii sunt falsis
 terroribus † perturbati; alii philosophantium
 argutiis impliciti; alii denique audacter
 atque impiè pedibus iverunt in eam senten-
 tiam, quæ libidinibus eorum daret fræna,
 et licentiæ vel fœdissimæ viam aperiret ||.

Hæc si vera sunt,—si tales opiniones inse-
 derunt, non solùm in animis infimæ multi-
 tudinis, verùm etiam eorum qui studium
 suum

* Natur. Hist. Lib. VII. 56. Edit. Brotier.

† Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I. sect. 31.

‡ Ibid. sect. 5. Horat. Epist. Lib. II. 2. 208.

|| “ Simul atque audivit à philosopho voluptatem tanto-
 perè laudari, nihil expiscatus est; sic suos sensus volupta-
 rios omnes incitavit, sic ad illius hanc orationem adhinnit,
 ut non magistrum virtutis, sed auctorem libidinis à se illum
 inventum arbitraretur.” Cic. in L. Pisonem, sect. 28.

suum omne in doctrinâ excolendâ diligenter collocaverunt, quantum est id, de quo gloriari et sibi plaudere debeant fautores humanæ rationis? Posito autem, veteres Philosophos in tantâ quæstione sæpè et multùm erravisse, quæ tandem causa excogitari potest, cur recentiores, suo tantummodo ingenio nisi, ad veritatem propius accesserint?—Quicquid se cognitionis nomine commendat, certis quibusdam, definitissime principiis inniti debet. In ipso autem limine si titubetur, ratio ulteriùs progredi non potest. Probabilia quidem argumenta à non-nullis Philosophis et ingeniosè conficta sunt et in lucem prolatâ. Sunt tamen docti homines ac pii, qui putent per corporis vitâ et sensu carentis aspectum, præberi animæ nunquam à mortuis excitandæ testimonium, quod longè superet tûm conjecturas, tûm argumentationes, in aliam partem afferri solitas.

CREDIBILE est igitur, nisi Deus cogitationibus nostris quasi facem prætulisset, vix aut ne vix quidem in mentem cujusvis venire potuisse, vitam, quæ unâ cum sanguine effluere videatur, esse reddituram. At anima, inquiunt, est quiddam à corpore sejunctum. Quis verò eam oculis unquam usurpavit? Aut qualis sit, concepit? Aut concipere etiam potuit, quid de eâ actum sit, corpore jam extincto?

tincto?—Ut rerum igitur analogia atque ipsa experientia ad expectationem vitæ futuræ firmam et constantem nos ducant, tantum abest, ut, nisi rei hujuscē cognitio fuisset à Deo profecta, aut omnino nullā esset, aut nullā saltēm auctoritate, quæ eam diuturnam et utilem redderet, stabilitā. Minimè me fugit, scriptores nonnullos esse, graves pietate et judicio insignes, qui analogiæ in hâc re magnum pondus esse existiment. Mihi autem ipsi, cùm Philosophorum sententias, à revelationis auctoritate sejunctas, acerrimè et attentissimè cogitatione versarem, usu id venire fateor, quod Ciceroni olim contigit.

“ Nescio quo modo dum lego,
 “ assentior: cùm posui librum, et mecum
 “ ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogi-
 “ tare, assensio omnis illa elabitur*.”

“ Stoicos” ait Cicero, “ quod totâ in
 “ hâc causâ difficultimum est, suscipere, posse
 “ animum manere corpore vacantem †.”

Mihi

* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I. seſt. 11. Vide etiam Legat. Divin. Warburtoni Lib. III. seſt. 3. Tom. II. pp. 186, 187.

† Quæ à me ita dicta sunt, absit ut quispiam putet male dicere et contumeliosè esse jaſtata in memoriam maximè venerandi Præſulis, Butleri τὸ μαρτυρίτε.—Liber, quem prudens vir ille et gravis de Analogiâ scripsit, et acumine ingenii et ponderibus argumentorum meritò ab omnibus laudatur. In primâ autem illius parte, quæ ad vitæ spem futuræ potissimum spectat, soleo nonnihil requirere ad probationem, qualem Analogia præstare debeat, explicatè et distinctè conficiendam.

† Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I. seſt. 32.

Mihi autem nec “facile ad credendum illud” esse videtur; neque “eo, quod Stoici volunt; concessio, consequetur, ut, cùm diu permane-“ferit, ne intereat.” Vitam igitur ut pro cognito habeamus futuram esse, vel sempiternam, vel omnino ullam; nodus iste quidem est vel in primis vindice Deo dignus. Deum autem hanc difficillimam quæstionem expediisse læti gratique agnoscimus, siquidem vitam, quæ æterna sit, omnes manere planè definitéque docuit, et quasi testimoniū rei ipsius atque exemplum è mortuis JESUM CHRIS-TUM fuscitavit.

PRIUSQUAM hancce disputationem ad umbilicum perducam, paucula sunt dicenda de iis, qui opeū Revelationis hodiè abjiciunt, remque totam in Rationis vi positam esse temerè affirmant. Profectò eādem, quā veteres Philosophi, caligine, animi eorum sunt mersi; aut, si quid melius sapiunt, id omne à Christianâ Religionē malâ fide mutuati sunt. Eadem est in utrisque de religionis ac morum principiis inconstantia, eadem sententiarum inter se repugnantium discordia, eādem in re gravissimâ nugae atque ineptiæ. Quorsum dogmata hæc novorum Philosophorum tendant, si quis scire velit, oculos, oro, is conjiciat ad Europam sanguine et cæde

redundantem*; reputet secum civilis societatis fœdera disrupta; jura privata æquè ac publica conculcata; leges tori jugalis irrisas; contemptui habita sacrosancta omnia; reverentiam denique Dei et vitæ spem futuræ, aut Metaphysicis oppugnata captiunculis, aut scurrili dicacitate temerè atque arroganter petita.

Qui se Θεοφιλανθρώπους appellant, quid verum atque utile sit, honestè præ cæteris et anxiè curare et inquirere profitentur. Libellum igitur ediderunt omnia ferè dogmata continentem, quæ Naturalis Religio sibi vindicat, nonnulla etiam, quæ tradit Revelata. Quin eò sive temeritatis sive superbiæ progressi

* De causis tumultuum Gallicorum, bellique luctuosi, quod indè exarsit, multis et penè inauditis vitiis, neutiquam me decet aliquod *ωλιτικὸν σκέμμα* proferre. Viro tamen Christiano integrum est illud dicere, tam immania flagitia aut non existisse, aut saltem calamitatibus tot tantisque ortum non dedisse, si in gente illâ Religio Revelata, vel pleniùs accuratiusque esset intellecta, vel usu diligentiore à Philosophis et Theologis exculta. Impensè verò lætor, quodd miferiarum harum gravissimarum, et fœdissimorum errorum sentina tandem aliquando exhausta esse videatur. Dulce nomen Pacis est, et res ipsa, cùm ad vitas fortunásque civium tuendas, tùm ad religionem et virtutem conservandam valdè salutaris. Patria autem nostra, cùm et famis et belli periculis nuperrimè defuncta sit, fas esto Deum precari, ut perennia ac propria nobis posterisque nostris munera hæc ipsius faxit.

ΤΑΝΔΕ, ΠΑΤΕΡ ΤΡΙΛΛΙΣΤΕ, ΣΑΩ ΠΟΛΙΝ, 'ΕΝ Θ' ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑΙ,
 'ΕΝ Τ' ΕΥΗΠΕΙΑΙ· ΦΕΡΕ Δ' ΑΓΡΟΘΙ ΝΟΣΤΙΜΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ.
 ΦΕΡΒΕ ΒΟΑΣ, ΦΕΡΕ ΜΑΛΑ· ΦΕΡΕ ΣΤΑΧΥΝ, ΟΙΣΕ ΘΕΡΙΣΜΟΝ.
 ΦΕΡΒΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΑΝΑΝ, 'ΙΝ', 'ΟΣ ΑΡΟΣΕ, ΤΗΝΟΣ ΑΜΑΣΕΙ.
 Vid. Callim. Hymn. in Cererem.

progressi sunt, ut, quod antiqui Philosophi assequi nequiverint, id se suo ingenio ornatè cumulatèque perfecisse jaētitent. At verò vel incerta, vel falsa, esse pleraque omnia, quæ vel docendi causâ vel gloriandi dixerint, quævis ferè pagina ἐγχειρίδίz illius decantati manifestissimis exemplis evicerit. Evidem confidentissimè affirmaverim, quicquid paulò fanius inter fautores hosce humanæ rationis repertum sit, è sacrarum scripturarum aut præceptis aut verbis esse desumptum. Quā in re fraudis an erroris plus sit, alii viderint. Me certè judice, nihil propriæ ac suæ laudis Revelatio Divina per Θεοφιλανθρώπου istos amiserit, nihil novæ atque inauditæ victoriæ Ratio humana reportaverit.

Quæ cùm ita sint, grates oportet vel maximas agamus Deo, qui mentibus nostris, quod unum defuerat, largè supeditaverit. Absit verò illud, ut qui Revelationis vel auctoritatem defenderit, vel sanctitatem utilitatémque explicaverit, idcirco Rationem aliquā contumeliā velle afficere existimetur. Esse eam ipsam à Deo profectam, lubentissimè confiteor.—Quibuscunque viribus fit prædita, quibuscunque usibus inferviat, necesse est nunquam non recordemur, Rationem quasi lumen quoddam vitæ homi-

hominibus esse à Deo concessam. Ea merito ac jure in secundis consistere debet, licet Religioni dentur Primæ. Quòd autem sequi hanc ducem et eidem tanquam famulari Rationem decet, est illud quidem non modò in sanctissimi munera, verùm etiani pulcherrimi amplissimique beneficii, loco ponendum.

REVELATA Religio hoc, an illo, tempore è cœlo descenderit, quid tandem interest? Quin illud potius meminerimus, solidam atque expressam veritatis imaginem idcirco posse in disciplinâ Christianâ reperiri, quòd doctrinarum optimarum scientiam auxerit et provexerit; quòd Deum nobis unum ad colendum proposuerit; quòd cultum ejus sanum purumque saluberrimis præceptis instituerit; quòd cognitionem vitæ futuræ plenam et perfectam nobis pateficerit; quòd denique in luce vel clarissimâ res multas collocaverit, quæ summâ solertiâ summâque diligentia Veterum Philosophorum frustrâ essent investigatæ*. Rationis autem patronos

* De materie hujus disputationis ita me amicissimè monuit Parrius. “Totam hancce de usibus, quibus Revelatio inservierit, quæstionem fusè et dilucidè tractavit Joannes Ellis, D.D. Sanctæ Catharinæ, Dublinii, olim Vicarius. Primi Voluminis editio secunda, Londini vulgata est, A.D. 1771, sub titulo; ‘The knowledge of Divine things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature.’ Profectò liber iste multa habet nova; multa, me saltèm judice, ad contemplandum salutaria;

tronos etiam atque etiam monitos velim,
ut animum suum attentum et penitus
infixum habeant in gravissima hæc Baconi
verba. “Causa verò et radix ferè omnium
malorum in scientiis ea una est, quod, dum
mentis humanæ vires falsò miramur et ex-
tollimus, vera ejus auxilia non quæramus*.”

salutaria; nonnulla etiam, in quibus Ellisius (ut homo erat
aci et fervido ingenio) mihi videtur ὑπὲ τὰ ισκαμμένα
πηδᾶν. Operi suo coronidem imposuerit, nécne, ignoro.
Fando autem accepi mortem scriptoris impedimento fuisse,
quod minus secundum Volumen in lucem emitteretur.”

* Novum Organum, &c. Aphorism. ix.



uulja sovintea rapido, cunoscute minore gradat
probabilitatea multoror oriceva de lucru cu
inovatii care sunt scutulierig in tehnicii respectiv
construczoaferintelor de obtinerea rezultatelor
naturale. De aceea se intampla advegnat
ca de la un singur obiect sa treaca o lunga
distanta, de unde se pot obtineti rezultatelor

este evident ca in locul unde se intampla o inova
tia se pot intampla si alte inovatii de natura
lui, care sunt legate intre ele. In acesta se intam
pla de la un singur obiect sa treaca o lunga
distanta, de unde se pot obtineti rezultatelor

CONCIO AD CLERUM.

JUDIC. CAP. xi. COMM. 39.

Expletisque duobus mensibus, reversa est ad patrem suum: et fecit ei sicut voverat, quæ ignorabat virum.

RE S ferè nulla est, quæ Revelatam Religionem graviore damno affecerit, quæm prava Sacrosanctæ Scripturæ interpretatio. Ex hâc exortæ sunt Hæreses illæ, quæ Ecclesiæ statum concordem ac pacificum tumultuosis dissidiis interpellaverint. Hæc venerando nomini Religionis maculas identidèm aspersit, adversariis ejus injuriæ ei inferendæ occasionem avidè captantibus, neque amicis, quantâ vel fide vel diligentia oportebat, impetus eorum reprimentibus. Is verò error longè est deterrimus, quem aut annorum series penè sanxisse videatur, aut in quem pateat viros, piëtate aut doctrinâ insigues, esse prolapsos. Quò autem diutiùs inoleverit ex pravâ aliquâ

F F F inter-

interpretatione vulnus, eò acriore opus est curâ in adhibendis ei remediis. Neque magis mihi videtur Religioni prodesse posse verus ejusdem fautor ac satelles, quām si quis hujusmodi labem per sacula jam complura infixam, et per injuriosas etiam amicorum manus fœdiorem factam, idoneâ explanatione deterferit. Materiem itaque neque planè inutilem neque prorsùs injucundam videor sumturus, si quæ de celebri illo Jephthæ voto in hunc usquè diem à plurimis vel insulsè, vel pravè, intellecta sint, rectè interpretari aggrediar. Rem enim ab Historico sacro narratam ita plerique acceperunt, ac si insignis ille Israëlis Judex, ipsius Jehovæ ductu victoriam ab hostibus reportans, ex voto ritè concepto filiam unicam ad aras Dei trucidaverit. Quam quidem opinionem ita latè sparsam videmus, ut Poëtæ* tragœdiarum materiem, et tabularum Pictores †, virginem hancce, tanquam alteram Iphigeniam, sumere non dubitârint.

Αταρ

* Notissima est de hoc argumento Georgi Buchanani fabula.

† In libello, cui titulus, "Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors," multis solidisque argumentis Brownius contendit, nec textui nec rationi convenire, ut credamus Jephthæ filiam esse immolatam. Vid. Lib. V. cap. 14. de picturâ Jephthæ filiam sacrificantis.

‘Ατὰρ τί δὴ σόφισμα τεῦθ’ ἡγέμενοι
 ’Ες τήνδε παιδα ψῆφον ὥρισαν φόνε;
 Πότερα τὸ χρῆν σφ’ ἐπήγαγ’ ἀνθρωποσφαγεῖν
 Πρὸς τύμβον, ἐνθα βεθυτεῖν μᾶλλον πρέπει*;

Quocircà, suis sibi, per me licet, vel commentis opinionum, vel artium suarum blanditiis isti gaudeant, quibus nimirūm “*audendi quidlibet æqua semper fuit potestas.*” Qui autem Theologorum se nomine dignantur, ii tandem aliquando, velim, resipiscant: et facinus, tūm à divinâ legis Mosaicæ auctoritate, tūm etiam à summi Numinis laude penitus abhorrens, à paginis sacris amoveant†.

SED

* Eurip. Hec. v. 262.

† Non dissimulandum est Hopfnerum, Iphigeniæ in Aulide editorem, alitèr de hâc quæstione statuisse. Vid. Disserationem de Euriped. Iphig. p. 68. Halæ. 1794. “Quām facile,” inquit, “latro, qualis Jephtha erat, tale votum suscipere poterat! Nec anxiè philosophandum, cur non enumerauerit fibi anteâ leges Mosaicas (Levit. xviii. 21. xx. 1. —5. Deut. xviii. 10.) è quibus tale sacrificium illicitum erat, id quod in eo, quo nunc erat statu, nullo modo facere poterat: in primis, cùm id temporis non religio Mosaica, sed gentilium regnaret.” — Quod ad Mosis præcepta attinet dicit vir doctissimus; “Attamen hæc quoque, si Jephtha deliberâset, eum non potuissent movere, quia in l. c. de sacrificiis humanis, idolis, Molocho, oblatis sermo est.”

Hopfneri hæc argumenta facilè dilui possunt. Primò scire velim, undè didicerit *merum* latronem fuisse Jephtham? Exsulem fateor eum et profugum fuisse, et ad tolerandam vitam expeditiones militares suscepisse; undè Gilhaditæ adducti esfent, ut eum fibi ductorem præficerent. Prædas etiam agebat, unâ cum sociis suis, sed non nisi justas, ab Ammonitis scilicet, (uti viris doctis placuit) aut Philistæis. Virum tamen sapi-

SED priusquam de naturâ istius eventûs quæstionem instituamus, illud quidem est anquirendum, utrum verbis, ad Hebraicam veritatem accuratè informatis, eventus ipse repræsentetur. Et hîc quidem dolendum est paulò infeliciùs actum esse cum Auctore Vulgatæ Versionis, siquidem, unà cum τοῖς ὄ, verba, quibus Heros votum conceperit, malè reddiderit, masculino genere, “qui-cumque,” pro neutro, “quodcumque,” usus. Archetypi Hebraici sensum commodè expressit Targum Jonathanis, quâcum Anglica

entem se præbuit, pium erga Deum, et parentem filiæ suæ amantissimum; neque ullum exstat testimonium, quo probari possit eum crudelem et injustum fuisse prædatorem. Secundò, constat ex sacrâ Scripturâ religionem tum temporis non Gentilium, sed Mosaicam, vim habuisse inter eos, qui Jephthæ parebant. Dato autem, legem Mosaicam aliquâ ex parte esse infirmatam, minimè sequitur præcepta illa de hominibus immolandis gravissima in desuetudinem abiisse. Tertiò, quod Deus sacrificia humana Molocho immolata abominatus esset, illud ipsum argumento est, neutiquam ea posse Deo placere. Optimè igitur Junius dicit; “Si sacrificium Isaaci, quod imperaverat, Deus recusavit; quantò minus votivum esset accepturus?” Cultorum profectò impietas in eo posita est, non solum quod liberos, sed quod homines sacrificarent. Per leges autem Mosaicas nulla est parentibus data potestas in vitam liberorum.

Sunt qui, cùm Jehovæ honori consultum esse velint, neque tamen concedant Jephthæ filiam, ob votum quod pater ejus suscepisset, non occisam esse, opinentur “hanc fuisse corruptionem istius ætatis, in quâ Jephtha vixerit; et, mutato nomine, sacrificium hoc fuisse Molocho, Deo Ammonitarum, contra quos jam pugnaturus esset.” Vid. Poli Synopsin, Tom. I. p. 1150. Istiusmodi conjecturæ quid valeant, alii viderint.

Anglica Versio arctè consentit. “Et erit, quod egredietur egrediens extrà à portis domûs meæ ad occursum meum, quando revertar in pace à filiis Ghamon, et erit ante Dominum, et ascendere faciam id holocaustum.” Illud quoque notandum, quòd in commate, à quo concionis hujusc argumentum desumitur, paulò obscuriore usus est verborum structurâ Vulgatus Interpres; “et fecit ei sicut voverat, quæ ignorabat virum.” Paraphrasis Chaldaica iterum accuratè, et cum Hebraico, et cum nostrâ, atque etiam τοῖς ὁ amicè conspirans, ita eum locum interpretatur; “fecit illi votum suum, quod vovit: et illa non cognovit virum*.”

ET

* Parrius me per litteras monitum fecit, à meâ sententiâ olim stetisse Thomam Randolphum; cuius auctoritas in hâc re ideò pluris aestimanda sit, quòd Theologiæ, ut aiunt, orthodoxæ strenuus propugnator fuerit, et linguæ Hebraicæ eximiè peritus. Distinguit Randolphus inter כְּרֵם i. e. Cherem et נֶדֶר i. e. Neder, quorum utique votorum illud cum diris conjunctum esset, neque redimi posset; hoc diris omnino careret, et redimi posset, vel non redimi, pro arbitrio ejus qui vovisset. De hâc distinctione inter Neder et Cherem consulendi sunt scriptores, quos Polus in Synopsi suâ laudavit ad locum. Illud interea notandum est, vocem Cherem de Jephthæ voto non occurrere; sed verbum Neder bis à Sacro Scriptore in hoc Capite esse usurpatum. Alia etiam est conjectura Randolphi in Comm. 31mo, interpretando. Ellipsin esse putat τὸ lamed ante pronomen γένεται, ita ut pronomen illud referatur ad nomen Jehovæ, quod paulò antè præcesserat, et loci sensus sic Anglicè reddatur: *And I will offer to him (i. e. to the Lord) a burnt offering.* Qui Hebraicè sciunt

Et hæc quidem æquè magni momenti, et pro indubiis habenda. Quæ sequuntur, etiam si conjecturâ potissimum niti videntur, minimè tamen prætermittenda sunt. Suspicantur nonnulli eruditî viri in comm. 31. conjunctivam particulam pro disjunctivâ usurpari, locumque adeò verti debere; “consecrabitur, *aut* immolabitur* :”—“*aut* erit ante Dominum, *aut* ascendere faciam id holocaustum”. Et in ultimo hujus capitî commate, cùm Vulgatæ æquè ac vernaculæ nostræ versionis sensus sit idem, nempè quòd, “post anni circulum conveniant in unum filiæ Israël, et *plangant* filiam Jephœ Galaaditæ diebus quatuor;” hunc potius sensum alii volunt ipsum Archetypum postulare: “A diebus in dies ibunt filiæ Israël ad *alloquendum* filiam Jephœ Galaaditæ

sciunt, facilè concesserint multas istiusmodi ellipses in Sacris Scripturis reperiri. Vid. Genes. xxxvii. 4, 14. Josh. xv. 19. 1 Sam. xxiv. 20. 1 Reg. xix. 21. Job. xv. 21. xxxi. 37. Psalm. cxxxix. 20. Ezek. xxiv. 3.

Evidem (subjicit Parrius) conjecturam istam Randolph de pronomine per ellipsis explicando, non modò ingeniosam, sed verissimam puto. Vide Concionem ejus Anglice scriptam, quæ Oxonii habita est, Jun. viii. A. D. 1766.

* Vatabl. et Grot. “Votum est conditionale, sub disjunctione: nam homines non sacrificabantur Domino.” Haud secùs interpretatur locum Tremellius. “Erit inquam Jehovæ, aut offeram illud holocaustum.” Huic sententiae videtur omnino suffragari, vir pius et doctus, Brownius in libello suprà citato.

laaditæ quatuor diebus in anno:" seu, ut uno dicam verbo, contendunt argumentis planè validis, τὸ λῆγον potius significare "ad alloquendum," vel etiam "confabulandum," quam "ad lamentandum*."

SED omissis Grammaticorum argutiis et amoto quicquid est præjudicatæ opinionis, si quæramus, quid hæc sibi velit historia, neutiquam mihi arduum aut difficile videatur id, quod verum sit, assequi. Paucis †, ut

* **לְהַנּוֹת.** Verbum **תָּנִית** hic reddunt οἱ ὁ per Θεοφεῖς, et Vulg. per "plangent." Alii volunt sensum ejus in hoc loco esse, "ad confabulandum." Proculdubio in cap. v. comm. 11. verbum istud occurrit in sensu "confabulandi," et in aliis locis significat, "certâ conditione vel mercede conducere." Vid. Taylori Concordant.

" Extat in Pihel bis, Jud. v. 11. et xi. 40. In priori alloquium denotat manifestò. Ideò ut in posteriori ita sumamus, quia *res quoque id fert*, cùm filia Jephthæ non fuerit occisa." Gussetius in v. Eadem est Randolphi opinio. Vide concionem ejus suprà laudatam, p. 31. Vide etiam Clericum ad loc. et Poli Synops.

† Schulzius, in Volumine 2do. Scholior. in Vetus Testamentum, ad Judic. xi. 30—39. ita scribit. "Jephtha *Jovæ reverens* heros erat. cf. omnino v. 9. 11, 21, 23, 24, 28, 35. et Ebr. xi. 32. *Prudenter* etiam bonam suam Israelitarumque causam Ammonitarum regi probare studuerat v. 12—27. Matre verò meretrice natus patrísque domo expulsus ac prædonum dux factus legis Mosaicæ notitiam (accuratam certè) animo suo informare non potuit, et omnino Jephthæ miram legis Mosaicæ inscitiam sequentia manifestè arguunt. (1.) In nuncupando voto se victimam Deo oblaturum promittit, quodcumque ipſi, reduci ab hoste victori, primum óbrium futurum effet, cùm tamen per legem Mosaicam hominem immolare nefas effet, nec quodvis animal Deo rectè immolari posset. (2.) Votum impru-

ut opinor, dubium esse potest, quin Heros, vir
Hebræus, Dei et patriæ hostes aggressurus,
votum

imprudenter et contra legis Mosaicæ interdictum disertam adcommmodatéque ad Cananæam superstitionem factum irrevocabile existimat. (3.) ipse loco alieno procul à Siluntis tabernaculo virginem filiam Deo victimam offert, cf. v. 31, 35. et 39."

Quod ad primum Schulzii argumentum attinet, Jephthæ verba non sunt absolute intelligenda. Vovit, procul dubio, se oblaturum esse, quicquid ipsi primùm occurrisset. Vix autem credibile est, in tanto rerum suarum discrimine potuisse ei in mentem venire de rebus, quas lex offerri vetuisset. Mihi semper illud, quod Clerico placuit, magis probabile visum est; "Jephthæ fuisse greges pecudum, seu boum, capraru[m]ve, aut ovium, quæ sola animalia mactari possent, et quæ circa eam viam, quâ domum redditurus esset, errare solerent: quorum vel gregem integrum mactaturus esset, in holocaustum Jehovæ, si modò voti damnaretur." Vid. Clerici notam in v. 30. 2do. Votum à se factum irreocabile Jephtham existimavisse, non est cur miremur: neque ulla est caussa ad Cananæam superstitionem confugiendi. Per Legem enim Mosaicam, quam in ipso voto Jehovæ faciendo Jephtha se aliquâ ex parte et scire et venerari comprobavit, vel persolvi, vel, si res tulisset, redimi debebant omnia omnino vota. Quod Schulzius affirmet, "votum Jephtham contra legis Mosaicæ interdictum disertum fecisse," à petitione (ut dialektici aiunt) principii pendet. Occideritne is filiam suam, nécne, illa ipsa res est, quâ de agitur.—Neque filiae, neque ullius victimæ humanæ in voto fecit mentionem. Dato autem eam re verâ non occisam esse, cadant necesse est omnia, quæ à Schulzio dicta sunt, de inficiâ legis Mosaicæ, quâ Jephthæ mens occæcata fuerit. 3º. Quare in loco, qui *alienus* appellatur, voto suo Jephtha satisfecerit, caussam ipse Schulzius (ad comm. 39) satis idoneam affert. "Jephtha, cui hominum victimas haud infrequentes esse ex consuetudine cum gentibus Cananæis constare poterat, non ad Siluntis tabernaculum, quod in Ephraimitaram inimicè sentientium (cf. cap. 12.) terrâ ac potestate erat, sed loco alieno nec legitimo victimam Deo obtulisse censendus est."

Hæc si ita essent, etiamsi animalia, quæ offerri licitum esset, Jephtha se oblaturum esse vovisset, ea non potuisset quin immolaret in loco alieno; (idque necessitati, non ignorantiae, tribueret.

votum conceperit, eo more perficiendum, quo Mosis instituta præciperent. Vovit nimirūm Domino quicquid primūm redeunti Victori è domo suâ vel è stabulis* occurrisset, illud ὀλοκαυτῶσαι†. Neque id minùs certum videtur, non ei venisse in mentem id, quod primūm obvium fieret, ejusmodi futurum esse ut in sacrificio mactari non posset; qualia erant immunda omnia animalia, quæ Lex offerri vetaret ‡. Occurrit primūm redeunti filia, ejusmodi scilicet, ut lege non posset mactari. Quid ergo? Devoverat Domino quicquid primūm occurrisset; volens nimirūm ὀλοκαυτῶσαι, si ad sacrifici-

tribuendum fuisse. Quod si nulla omnino Victima est immolata sed Jephthæ filia virginitati et Dei ministeriis devota fuit, objectionis, quæ à loco alieno petita est, vis omnis evanescit.— Profectò, Mosaicorum præceptorum scientia, quanta Jephthæ fuerit, non is sum, qui definire ausim. Inscitiam verò ejus tantam fuisse, ut in Jehovæ honorem filiam suam sacrificaret, cùm Davidis et Prophetarum omnium de tali facinore silentium, tùm Apostoli eum collaudantis verba, mox proferenda, credere me non sinunt.

* Vid Cler. ad. ver. 31.

† **וְלֹהֶה** uti hîc scriptum est, vel **לֹהֶה**, quod reperitur Genes. viii. 20. Exod. xxxiii. 6. et alibi, descendit à radice, **לֹהֶה**, ascendere. Holocausti quippè flamma et fumus ad cœlum ascendebant. Vide Parkhurst. Lexicon in voce. Taylor. Concordant. pag. 1366. et Biel in v. ὀλοκαύτωμα.

‡ Quid? si asinus aut canis occurrisset, debuitne holocaustum fieri? Non sanè. Ergo nec humani generis quicquam. Grot.

sacrificium fuisset aptum; sin minùs, filiam ipsam voluit devotam esse Domino, quâcunque demùm viâ posset devoveri. Quânam autem viâ fieri potest, ut Virgo devota sit, atque maneret, Deo? Servando nimirùm Virginitatem, et sacra Ministeria Dei obeundo. Idque affatim, ut mihi videtur, asserunt Historici sacri verba; nisi qui, præconceptis opinionibus omnino occæcati, viâ malint vetere et difficiliore vagari, quâm in novam se dare et omnino tutam. “Fecit illi votum suum, quod vovit: et illa non cognovit virum.” Devovit eam pater, quantum potuit devovere. Illa in perpetuum mansit Virgo. Nullâ lege, humanâ aut divinâ, filiam pater trucidare potuit; cùm autem re verâ, ut putabat, Domino eam devovisset, solo quo potuit modo consecravit, Virginem ministram Numini dicando.

HUNC mihi sensum videntur facile præbere Sacri Historici verba. Et nisi sinistrè quodammodo à veteribus fuissent accepta, verbulum unum addere, ut in re manifestâ, supervacaneum foret. Cùm autem Interpretum permulti istum eventum alio prorsùs induerint colore, paulò fusiùs necesse est interpretationem hancce nostram stabiliamus, et ab adversariorum, five argumentis,

gumentis, sive captiunculis, pro virili vindicemus.

CAUSSÆ, quam defendendam suscepi, tria potissimum objiciuntur responsa, quæ cum redarguero, spero fore, ut sententia à me modò allata, tūm Scriptoris genuino sensui, tūm sacrosanctæ Scripturæ ipsius laudi videatur consentanea.

In primis igitur contenditur, non fuisse nefas per instituta Mosis devovere et morte afficere humanam Victimam;—negant quintam moris fuisse apud Hebræos in Dei ministerium Virgines dicare;—deinde ignorare se omnino profitentur, si Jephthæ filia tantummodò esset virgo mansura, quænam foret tanti, et sibi et patri ipsius, causa ejulatūs.

I. **CONTENDUNT**, inquam, nonnulli interpres, concessum fuisse à lege Mosaicâ humanam victimam litare: eique opinioni fidem, per locum quendam in libro Levitici, adstruere conantur. Locus ille qui continetur commas in 28vo. et 29mo. capitilis ultimi, sic se in Vulgatâ Versione habet. “ Omne, quod Domino consecratur, sive homo fuerit, sive animal, sive ager, non vendetur, nec redimi poterit. Quicquid semel fuerit consecratum, sanctum sanctorum erit Domino.

Et omnis consecratio, quæ offertur ab homine, non redimetur, sed morte morietur."

CUM insignis iste locus ad totum argumentum è nodis expediendum valdè profit, accuratâ eum trutinâ oportet ponderemus. Itaque si interpretum sententias quæramus, Ludovicus quidem Cappellus, qui adversariorum ἐνὶ τρομάχοις propugnat, reddere eum non dubitat; "omne interdictum, quod devotum fuerit ex humanis personis;" et exinde colligit, Israëlitis fas fuisse, quemcumque mortalium, sive Israëlita esset, sive peregrinus, morti consecratione addicere. Et, ut verum fatear, sensum vix alium verbis tribuunt Clericus et Rosenmüllerus; quamvis legem hancce Mosaicam putant pertinere tantummodo ad hostes Reip. Judaicæ, qui in bello internecioni fuissent devoti.—Liceat autem mihi in medium proferre, hominis verba in orientalibus litteris versatissimi, τε μακαρίτε Joannis Uri; qui, cùm ab eo, Oxonii degente, quid de loco hoc perobscuro ipse senserit, per amicum olim sciscitarer, hanc ad me versionem benignissimè misit. 'Hæc est,' inquiebat vir doctissimus, 'de duabus istis versibus mea sententia.' "Ac nulla res devota, quam devoverit aliquis Jehovæ, ex omnibus quæ sunt ei inter-

inter homines, sive bestia *fit*, sive pars *fit* agri possessionis ejus, vendatur aut redimatur: omnis res devota sanctitas sanctitatum est Jehovæ. Nulla bestia devota, quæ devovebitur ab homine, redimatur: omnino morte afficiatur.” Et cur comma posterius ita verterit, rationem hanc adjecit, “Vox חָרֵם significat in genere *res devota*, in specie, *bestia devota*: et hæc significatio determinatur per *morte afficiatur**.” Hujus itaque

* Lubet hîc totum illud exscribere, quod de re tam gravi mecum coûmunicavit vir eruditissimus.

“ LEVIT. xxvii. 28.

VERSIO.

Ac nulla res devota, quam devoverit aliquis Jehovæ, ex omnibus quæ sunt ei inter homines, sive bestia *fit*, sive pars *fit* agri possessionis ejus, vendatur aut redimatur: omnis res devota sanctitas sanctitatum est Jehovæ.

NOTA 1.

Vox בְּלֹ, quia sequitur particula negativa לֹא, cum quâ construitur, exprimi debet per nulla.

NOTA 2.

i Sam. xv. 33. Orbabitur מִנְשִׁיכָה inter mulieres mater tua. Ut præfixum מ in מִנְשִׁיכָה significat *inter*, ita מ in מַדְכָּה exprimit *inter*; et vox ipsa אֲדָמָה notat non tantum *hominem*, sed et *homines*.

NOTA 3.

Levit. v. 9. Et asperget מִדְבָּר partem sanguinis—super parietem. Ut præfixum מ in מִדְבָּר significat *partem*; non enim omnis sanguis aspergendus erat super parietem: ita מ in מִשְׂרָה partem notat; nemo enim omnes agros suos devovit. Littera נ, vocibus בְּהַמָּה et מִשְׂדָּה præfixa, disjunctiva est.

VERSIO

que tam eruditi viri opinionem, gravissimis argumentis stabilitam, cuiusvis alius Interpretis

VERSIO 29.

Nulla bestia devota, quæ devovebitur ab homine, redimatur: omnino morte afficiatur.

NOTA.

לְבָנָה, ut suprà, quia cum לְבָנָה construitur, exprimi debet per nulla. Vox חַרְבָּה significat in genere *res devota*, in specie *bestia devota*: et hæc significatio determinatur per morte afficiatur.”

Quæ Celeb. Uri de נֶגֶד, sensu τὸς *inter*, et de אֲדֹם significante *homines* perindè atque *hominem*, ejusmodi sunt, ut interpretatione aliquâ et exemplis illustrari debeant.

Particulam נֶגֶד “idem valere, quod μέν, unde originem duxerit,” benè nos monet Schroederus in Institutionibus suis ad fundamenta linguae Hebrææ. p. 188. Sect. de Particulis. Videamus jam loca nonnulla, in quibus τὸ οὖν vim habet τὸς *inter*, vel *de* vel *ex*, ita ut partem rei alicujus significet. Exod. xii. 5. *ex agnis* et *ex capris* accipietis. Num. xxxi. 30. unum apprehensum è quinquaginta, *ex homine*, *ex bove*. Jos. iv. 2. capite vobis è populo. Ruth ii. 14. comedes *de pane*. Paralip. I. ix. 3. habitaverunt *de filiis* Jehudah. Jerem. xxxix. 10. *de plebe* tenues. Vid. Calasio. Concordant. in v. מִן Tom. II. In Dan. i. 19. vim habet τὸς *inter*. et non inventus est מִכְלֵב *inter omnes*, et si legitur in τοῦς ὄντας, εἰς πάντας, et in vulgat. *de universis*. A מִן profluit נֶגֶד pars, נֶגֶדים plur. vices. numeri.—Vid. Lexicon Hebr. et Chald. Passionei. p. 423. Tom. II. et Calasio. in voce. Tom. II. p. 1172.

אֲדֹם sèpè *unumquemque* et *homines* significat. Ezr. xxxiv. 31. Job. xxxiv. 26. super *unumquemque*—Hæc voces, inquit Passionei, בְּנֵי אֲדֹם, בְּנֵי hominis, ubique significant, sicut Psalm. viii. 5. Vide Passio. in voc. אֲדֹם. Tom. II. p. 9.

אֲדֹם aliquando sumitur *pro homine in universalis*, seu, *pro humanâ naturâ* בְּנֵי אֲדֹם *filii hominis*, universum genus humanum. Calasio. Tom. I. p. 47. in voce. *filios hominis*, in Psalm. xxxiii. 13.—*opera hominum*. Psalm. xvii. 4 *omnes homines* viderunt illud, in Job. xxxvii. 7.

Mirum est, quantum Hebræi scriptores sibi in Syntaxi indulserint. “Nomina collectiva,” (inquit Schroederus) “hoc est,

pretis anteferre non dubitârim. Verùm enimvero, ne opinioni cujusquam, utcunque sit doctus, niimiùm auctoritatis tribuere videamur, libet potius, id quod in omni difficiili quæstione fieri debet, ex ipsius loci contextu, et ex universo legum tenore, uter potissimum interpres sententiam tulerit magis cum utroque congruentem, dijudicare.

TOTUM illud Levitici caput versatur in præscribendo, quænam ex iis, quæ Deo devoteantur, redimi, et quo pacto, debeant; quæ è contrario, nullo modo aut pretio, ex voti

est, quæ in singulari numero aliquam hominum, animalium, aut rerum multitudinem significant, non tantum ut singularia, ratione formæ suæ, sed et ut pluralia ratione significationis, construi possunt; ut, *populus inventi cum eo.*" Sam. I. xiii. 15. Et ibunt vir. i. e. quisque vel singuli. Jud. ix. 55. Schroeder. de Syntaxi Nom. sect. I. Reg. 26.

Angli hanc posteriorem constructionem non imitamus. Sæpè tamen verbum, *man*, æquè ac *men*, omne genus humanum significat. Neque aliter scriptores Latini.

Pennis non *homini* datis. HORAT. Lib. I. Od. 3.

—Nunquam *homini* satis

Cautum est in horas. Ibid. Lib. II. Od. 13.

Atque hinc forsitan intelligendus est locus iste perobscurus:

Scit genius, natale comes qui temperat astrum,

Naturæ Deus humanæ, *mortalis* in unum-

quodque caput, vultu mutabilis, albus et ater.

Ib. Epist. II. ii. 187.

Virum quendam apprimè doctum novi, qui cùm ipsum Genium hic dici mortalem denegaret, *mortalis*, vice mortalium, poni censuerit, ita tamen ut in aliud, qui huic similis esset, vocis istius usum, (scil. singular. loco plural.) se non incidisse fateretur.

voti obligatione queant liberari. Res profectò illæ, in quibus devotio fieri potuit, erant homines, domus, agri, animalia; dein ex his, alia quidem munda, alia verò immunda. Pretium, quo homines cujusvis ætatis redimi poterant, disertè assignatur: ita ut unicuique, qui quamcunque ob causam humanam personam devovisset, patuerit planè via, per quam persona illa devota ex voti necessitate foret absoluta. Si quis itidem Jehovæ ædes, agros, aut immunda animalia (quæ, ut lex ipsa declarat, omnino nefas esset immolare) votis conceptis ritè addixisset, pretium rebus aut animalibus ita devotis inrogare, lege jubeatur sacerdos. Is igitur, qui eorum aliquid ita consecrâisset, si posteà redimere voluisset, copia ei propositi exsequendi facta est; modò pretium ritè persolveret, et quintam ejusdem partem insuper impenderet. Sin autem immundi aliquius animalis Dominus redimere illud nollet, tum omnino id vendi oportere lex statuebat; eo, ut videtur, consilio, ne qua dubitatio oriretur, de victimâ, in tali rerum statu, immolandâ. Id enim, bestia si immunda esset, ne per ullam unquam recti speciem fieret, abundanter et apertè in lege cautum fuit. Quin immò, si possessor agri, qui post annum Jubilei fuisset devotus, aut

pretio

pretio à sacerdote æstimato redimere illum noluisset, aut alii cuivis mancipâsse, tum denique lege præscriptum est nunquam ei cessurum fore agrum ita devotum, postquam dies Jubilei venisset; sed Sacerdotibus in perpetuum iri assignatum. Occasione eum redimendi semel omisâ, talis ager nullâ viâ aut ratione posteà redimi potuit. De mundis etiam animalibus explicatè et definitè constitutum est, nullum ob ea accipi debere aut pretium aut permutationem: quin omnino immolentur. Hic planè est commatum. præcedentium sensus: dein sequuntur, quæ modò citavimus.

His autem diligenter perpensis, quis est, qui non statim agnoscat, neutiquam hîc agi de personis humanis, aut de immundis animalibus, quorum utraque omnino redimere esset necesse, quorūmque adeò redimendorum ratio esset definita: sed tantummodò de agro, quem redimere esset vetitum, et de mundis animalibus, quæ nullum unquam pretium tantum valuerit, ut ab occisione vindicaret? Repeti hîc videmus eadem præcepta, quæ de rebus planè iisdem paulò antè fuerant Israëlitis data. Repetuntur autem more, omnibus legum latoribus, in primis Moï, tûm usitato, tûm necessario.

Cum hâc expositione congruit omnino viri eruditissimi sententia. Quòd si cum plerisque Interpretum locum vertas, non solum pugnabunt sequentia cum præcedentibus, quæ nunc amicè cohærent; sed in meras ineptias ibitur, ac nugas deridendas. Si enim cum adversariis locum accipiamus, pari, opinor, ratione contendere licebit, posse agrum atque hominem occisione occidi. Jure itaque unus Interpretum quærit, “Quomodo hoc fit, cùm ager atque homo inter consecrata numerentur *?” Lyra etiam verbis, magis profectò ob vim, quàm ob elegantiam laudandis, benè animadvertis. “Dicitur, Omnis consecratio morietur, &c. et tamen ager ibi dicitur Deo consecrari, qui tamen non est susceptivus mortis; dicebatur tamen mortificari, quia transibat ad jus Sacerdotum vel Templi; sicut bona Ecclesiæ dicuntur amortizata †.”

VERUM

* Vid. Poli Synops. ad Levit. xxvii. 29.

† Non possum mihi persuadere, quin proferam vexatissimi hujusc loci versionem, à Theologis Anglicis factam, qui Genevam, regnante illâ furiosæ superstitionis fautrice, Mariâ, se receperant. Notwithstanding nothing separate from the common use that a man doth separate unto the Lord—for every thing separate from the common use is most holy unto the Lord. Nothing separate from common use, which shall be separate from man, shall be redeemed. Neque inficiandum est, quin hujusc modi versio à primigeniâ vocis קדש significatione proprius absit. Vide Parkhurst in voce: et Taylori Concordant.

VERUM si, argumenti gratiâ, concedamus sensum hujusce loci ita obscurum esse, ut, quid sibi velit, certò definiri non possit; tamen, quò secum lex divina congruat, restat, ut vim ejus ex tenore universorum Mosis institutorum interpretemur, et ex iis præcipue, quæ ad rem similem, vel prorsùs eandem, referantur.— Tenor itaque legis Mosaicæ est mitis, clemens, humanus; ejusmodi scilicet, ut si conferatur, vel cum sapientissimis Ethnicorum institutis, vel non-nullis, quæ hodiè etiam apud Christianos valent, nimiis eam laudibus efferre nequeas. Propositum est porrò hujusce legis vel in primis, ut ab erroribus, et vitiis, et feritate, quæ Idololatras tûm in civilibus, tûm etiam in sacris rebus dedecorarent, integrum atque intactum populum Israëliticum servaret. Jam verò inter eas alienigenarum confuetudines, quibus Dominus per Mosen pœnas minitatur, et à quibus ut diligenter abhorreat, genti suæ semel atque iterùm ac sæpiùs imperat, tanquam insigne quoddam scelus et immane, exstat humanarum victimarum, præcipue verò liberorum, manu parentum interfectorum, Immolatio. Ecquid, tandem, illo perpetuo interdicto, quod in Deuteronomio legitur, vel ad explicandam Dei

voluntatem uberius, vel ad stabiliendam illam gravius excogitari potest? “Quando disperdiderit Dominus Deus tuus ante faciem tuam gentes, ad quas ingredieris possidendas, et possederis eas, atque habitaveris in terrâ earum: Cave ne imiteris eas, postquam te fuerint introeunte subversæ, et requiras cæremonias earum, dicens: sicut coluerunt gentes istæ Deos suos, ita et ego colam. Non facies similiter Domino Deo tuo. Omnes enim abominationes, quas aversatur Dominus, fecerunt Diis suis, offerentes filios et filias et comburentes igni. Quod præcipio tibi, hoc tantum facito Domino: nec addas quicquam, nec minuas*.”

PLENIUS certè aut clariùs declarare non potuit Jehova, se se nolle eodem modo atque iisdem ritibus coli, ac Gentium Dii colerentur. Eam tamen ob caussam Deus videtur ritus illos præcipue abominandos ipso de cœlo pronunciare, quòd sanguine humano homines præposteri ipsas etiam aras inquinarent†. Flagitium planè majus admittere in se non potuerunt impii cultores, quām si,

* Cap. xii. 29, &c.

† 2 Paralip. xxvii. 3. Psalm. cvi. 37, 38. Isai. lvii. 5. Jerem. viii. 31. xix. 5.

si, quo tempore Deum maximè vellent sioi propitium fieri, eo tempore ipsi in alios homines maximè iniquos et crudeles se præstarent. Pluribus hoc argumentum onerare testimentiis effet supervacaneum : tantùm id dicam, omnia omnino legis præcepta, omnes Prophetarum admonitiones, universum denique facroſanctæ scripturæ tenorem, cum verbis modò citatis prorsùs convenire. Igitur, quò minùs Cappelli rectè fese habeat interpretatio, vetat totius legis, à Mose prolatæ, ratio. Si igitur nullum omnino foret inter Interpretes dissidium, accuratæ critices norma prohiberet, ne id de parte acciperemus, quòd totum pessundaret.

PRÆTEREA, si ista, quæ Cappello placuit, legis sententia effet, et si ita eam intelligerent Hebræi, annon credibile est, nonnulla posse subindè reperiri talis voti vestigia ? Humanas viëtimas litare si lege permissum effet, id certè erit concessum, maximè eos fore de Numine merituros, qui talia, utpote quæ maximo pretio constarent, sacrificia adhiberent. Nullone patriæ discrimine, nullis rerum angustiis, conventum effet inter populi principes, Deo ut offerrent, quod omnium sacrificiorum, aut ad iram ejus avertendam aut favorem conciliandum effet efficacissimum ?

mum? Id enim apud Gentes alias sæpiissimè factum novimus*. Munus scilicet isti putabant Diis acceptissimum, et ad pœnam à se depellendam maximè accommodatum, sanguinem humanum. Atqui nullum istiusmodi *náθaqwa*, ab Israëlitis oblatum, tradidit Historia: neque voti unquam ullius, quod istiusmodi esset, Sacri Annales meminerunt. An verò istuc five ineptiarum five impietatis confugient adversarii, ut affirmare non dubitârint, quæ Deus clementissimus propalàm fanciverit vota, ea ipsa ob sœvitiam atque immanitatem suscipere in se homines fermidavisse? Si igitur nullum istiusmodi voti reperitur exemplum, si nulla istiusmodi sacrificia sunt non modò facta, sed ne probata quidem à Judæis, imò si in talia (modò fas sit dicere) sacra pœnas ubique et exitium vox divina minitatur, non crediderim Jephtham, in quem immissus fit spiritus Domini, et qui ab Apostolo honorificè nominetur, ad scelus esse aggressum, quod à Naturâ humana

* Vid. testimonia supra citata, p. 378. Quibus adde sis Spencer. de Legg. Hebraeor. Tom. I. p. 363, 364, &c. Marshami Can. Chronic. pp. 77, 112, 121, 318, &c. 4to. Franequeræ, 1696. et eruditas Grotii annotationes ad Deuter. xviii. 10. ubi locum è Sophoclis Andromedâ citat.

*νόμος γάρ ετι τοῖσι βαρεύεσσι Κρόνῳ
δυηπολεῖν βέρτειον ἀρχῆθεν γένος.*

manâ longissimè abhorreat, atque adeò quod Deus, Naturæ istius Auctor et Perfector, non possit non abominari.

IN hâc autem parte argumenti nostri, scrupulus restat tantùm unus, in quo eximendo me diutiùs immorari patiar. Quæritur enim, si ex lege filiam posset Jephtha redimere, cur eam non redemerit? Sacer Historicus cùm de hâc re omnino taceat, locus non nisi conjecturæ datur. Alii igitur ignorantiae illud tribuunt; alii magis probabilitè, uti opinor, magisque simpliciter, superstitioni. “Non fecit,” inquit Clericus, “superstitione impeditus; quâ timuit ne Deum offenderet, si ullâ ratione videretur, voti reus, ejus non solvendi occasionem velle captare. Maluit filiam nunquam nupturam dare Pontifici Maximo, ut sacrâ, quatenus licuit, operaretur, quâm videri posse voti religionem ullo modo violâsse, quamvis Nepotes ex filiâ videre summoperè cupiisset. Hæc sunt multò magis rationi consentanea, quâm si quis Legem ita interpretetur, ut votum legitimum et ritè conceptum habeatur, si quis voverit Deo mactare liberos; nec votum illud ullâ ratione revocari, aut redimi possit; cùm Deus severissimè ejusmodi sacrificia

“ crificia vetuerit, ac proindè voveri ea sibi
 “ noluerit.” “ Videtur autem Jephtheus”
 (iterum inquit) “ noluisse redimere filiam,
 “ cùm metu ne votum violaret, tùm etiam
 “ quòd vile visum fuisset votum, si triginta
 “ sicutis Pontifici solutis, religione solutus
 “ fuisset*.”

II. VIDEAMUS autem quorsum valeant illorum argumenta, qui contendant non receptam esse apud Hebræos consuetudinem virginum in Dei ministerium dicandarum. Quid igitur è verbis sacri Scriptoris liquidò patet? Scriptum profectò legimus: “ Im-
 “ plevit Jephthes votum, et Virgo mansit
 “ filia.” At quæ tandem vola est, aut quod uspiam vestigium horrendi hujusc carminis?
 ‘ Utei Virginem Pater ad immolationem
 ‘ devovit, ita immolator; “ I, sacrificule,
 “ colliga manus. Caput obnubito. Pectus
 “ ferito. Corpus comburito.” Sic imple-
 “ vit Jephthes votum suum, et virgo immo-
 “ lata est.—Quid igitur colligendum? Vo-
 tum Jephthæ esse impletum in eo, quòd expers fuerit viri puella.—Ita, an secùs, in alias puellas factum fuerit, aliis de caussis cum religione conjunctis, id verò non quærimus. Res, quâ de agitur, singularis est,
 suíque

* Clerici Commentar. ad Vet. Testam. Jud. xi. 35.

suīque prorsus generis. Nullo alio tempore natam in Jehovæ honorem devovisse dicitur pater; imò, ne Jephthes quidem, nisi cæco quodam animi impetu abreptus, commisisset, ut sua devoveri posset. Breviter, uti mos est sacris scriptoribus, Historia hæcce narratur: nec opinari licet rem omnem eādem esse, quâ describitur, celeritate, peractam. Patrem, cùm filiam obviam vidisset, dolore fuisse perfusum, pro comperto habemus: tum primùm temerarii voti infelicitas magno et acerbo dolore animum ejus perculit. Illud insuper veri simile est multùm eum in animo diúque secum perpendisse, quānam viâ potissimùm oporteret votum à se persolvi, proptereà quòd filia ipsius nullo modo potuisse immolari. Ad res votivas, quæ non redimerentur, animum procul dubio appulit. Certior idcircò factus est agrum, ita deputum, in usum Pontificis Maximi ex legis præscripto cessurum: neque agrum tantummodo, verùm etiam rem omninò omnem*, quæ ex voto ritè nuncupato inter consecrata numeraretur. “ Cùm igitur filia non “ potuit esse holocausta, saltēm fuit Je-
“ hovæ;

* “ Omnis consecratio in Israël, tibi erit.” Num. xviii.
14. Animadverant lectores vocem חֲרֵב hoc in loco usurpari.

“*hōvæ*; hoc est” (inquit Clericus) “in ser-
 “vitutem data est Pontifici Maximo, qui
 “ejus operâ in rebus sacris uteretur; ex-
 “empli caußâ, in molendo tritico, undè
 “fierent panes sacri, pinsendâ farinâ, co-
 “quendis panibus, vestibus nendis ac texen-
 “dis, aliisque id genus ministeriis, quibus
 “apta esse poterat puella; ita ut nunquam
 “(quoniam se voto eam in rem obstrictam
 “putabat pater ejus Jephtheus, nec eam re-
 “dimere voluit) ab eâ servitute liberaretur,
 “sed innupta apud eum ad mortem mane-
 “ret *.” Innupta, inquam, necesse est man-
 serit; quoniam haud aliter potuit à confortio
 et negotiis hominum penitus sejungi; quippe
 quæ in proprium quoddam Dei ministerium
 consecrata videretur. Etenim apud omnes
 omnino Gentes, neque minus forsan apud He-
 bræos, ea semper increbuit opinio, mulieres
 illas, quæ divinis rebus præcipue interessent,
 servare oportere prorsus illibatum virginiti-
 tatis florem.

Postremo, hoc mordicùs tenendum;
 Jephtham, quum indissolubili quodam pu-
 dicitiæ nexu filiam constringeret, neque
 contra legis præscripta offendisse, et pro vi-
 rili votum adimpleuisse. Licet ergò erraverit,
 tamen

tamen quia piâ mente erravit, neutiquam statuendum est eum Jehovæ se invisum præstissimum. Sin illam immolâisset, adeò non Dei gratiam iniisset, ut è contrario, disertissima legis edicta violando, pœnas vel gravissimas meritò esset daturus. Quas cùm subiisse eum nusquam legimus, minimè credendum est eum, post maximos cruciatus mortis filiam unicam combussisse, atque adeò de industriâ et sobrium θύσιαν, vel Josepho judice, ὅτε νόμιμον, ὅτε τῷ Θεῷ κεχαρισμένην ἐπιτελέσαι, μὴ διαβασανίσαντα τῷ λογισμῷ τὸ γενησόμενον, οἷον τὸ ῥάχθεν δόξει τοῖς ἀκάστοις: *

PROFECTO arbitror, neque Heroä, neque rerum ab illo gestarum Scriptorem θεόπνευσον, de Virgine immolandâ semel somniavisse. Sæculorum est illud quidem multo posteriorum, atque hominum, qui sibi plus æquovidetur sapere, commentum!

III. Ecquæ autem, ut tertium illud tractem, ecquæ tanti ejulatûs caussa, si devota puella virginitatem tantum retinuerit? “*Virginitas*,” inquit Cappellus, “gloriosa “erat et commendabilis. Aut si flere virginitatem voluit, hoc in monasterio faciens, ubi lugendi tempus satîs longum illi supererat; anteaquam verò clauderetur, “decuit

* Antiq. Jud. Lib. V. c. vii. sect. 10.

“decuit potius cum amicis vitam agere
“lætam.”

Ex hujuscemodi potissimum sententiâ extortum puto illud erroris, quod hanc quæstionem turbaverit. Plerique, quia non potuerunt doloris satî validam rationem reddere, in quem incidisse et Jephtham et filiam pateat, collegerunt illicò, nullam aliam ob caussam, nisi ob mortem obeundam, tales potuisse fletus exoriri. Sed in hanc quæstionis partem è Scriptoribus profanis lucis nonnihil splendescet. Ab iis planè comparet, gentibus, eâ ferè morum specie quam Israëlitæ præ se ferrent, iisdemque ferè de quibus loquimur saeculis, talem fuisse insitam de honore parentibus debito opinionem, et tantam liberorum gratiam fuisse, ut mulieres, quæ sine liberis morerentur aut spe liberorum habendorum, maximè infelices existimarentur. Id perquàm dilucidè ostendunt tragœdiarum Græcarum Scriptores, qui saecula quæ vocantur Heroica tractant; et quos credibile est eas personis tribuisse opinions, quas traditio aut certior notitia proavis suis docuerit eos assignare.

AT ne quis dubitet idem planè, quod cæteræ gentes censuerint, de fecunditate matronarum sensisse Israëlitæ, spes illa, quam

vel

vel à primis populi incunabulis quisque conceperat, fore ut ex ipsius familiâ Messias ille, tam diu expectatus, támque avidè expectatus, oriretur, ad augendam etiam opinionem de matrimonii præstantiâ apud alios receptam, non potuit non valere. Idque, per annales Patriarcharum *; per Saræ, Rachelis, et Hannæ, postea quām sterilitatis probrum ab iis amotum fuisset, alacritatem et lætitiam; quinetiam per nonnulla † Mosis instituta, auctum et confirmatum videmus.

AD Tragœdos autem Græcos redeamus, quoniam ii et argumento nostro et sacræ etiam historiæ plurimum luminis offundunt. In fabulis eorum, si qua Virgo inducatur, sine partū spe peritura, semper illam invenimus dolore perfusam et edentem ejulatus, eā vel maximè de cauſſā, quòd innupta et sine liberis sit moritura. Quòd immaturus ei immineret interitus, quòd è parentū amplexu fit abripienda, quòd dulcissimo amicorum et ὅμηλίκων privanda in æternum confortio, hæc, inquam, omnia, utcunque acerba, non tamen solæ sunt lacrymarum cauſſæ. Illud enim graviter et
præ

* Gen. xvi. 4. xxi. 6. xxx. 1, 13, 20, 23. Vid. etiam 1 Sam. i. 8, 11. 2 Sam. vi. 23. and xx. 3.

† Exod. xiii. 14, 15. Deut. xxi. 15. xxv. 5. Ruth iv. 14. Vid. etiam Leyit. xx. 20. et Jerem. xxii. 30.

præ cæteris deplorant, propter quod Jephthæ filiam deploravisse legimus, scilicet ἐπὶ τὰ παρθένια. Antigonam audiamus, cùm ei mors impenderet, versiculis hisce tristissimis lugentem :

Καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν ὅτω λαβὼν
ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, ὅτε τὰ γάμες
μέρος λαχεῖσαν, ὅτε παιδεῖς τροφῆς*.

Regia illa et fortis virgo, Polyxena, quæ mortem, tanquam aufugium a servitute et infortuniis amicum, oppetebat, annon hoc ipsum reperiebat maximè dolendum, quòd ad inferos descenderet,

ἀνυμφας, ἀνυμέναιος, ὃν μ' ἔχρην τυχεῖν † ;

Hecubæ etiam, matris amantissimæ, gravissimis quibus exanimabatur vulneribus stimulum illud subdit acriorem, quòd funeris honore sit prosecutura

νύμφην τ' ἀνυμφον, παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον ‡ .

Oresti, profectò cùm ipse moriturus morituræ valedicit Sorori, nulla videtur esse acerbior doloris caussa, quàm quòd nuptiarum illa sit expers: idque, cùm Pyladi, quem unicè ipse diligeret, piè sancteque esset desponsa. Apud nos autem, iisdem in malis versatos,
non

* Antig. 916.

† Hec. 420.

‡ Hec. 616.

non iisdem esset verbis concepta fratris sōrōrem alloquentis valedictio:

Ὥσερν² ἀδελφῆς, ὦ φίλον πρόσπτυγμ³ ἐμὸν,
τάδ¹ ἀντὶ παιδῶν καὶ γαμηλίων λέχεις
προσφέγμαθ⁴ ἡμῖν τοῖς ταλαιπώροις πάρα*.

Ipsa denique Iphigenia (quam ne Ethnici quidem voluerunt re verā fuisse immolatam) cūm officio, quod parenti debebat, satisfacere cuperet, et ad interitum rueret voluntarium, magnitudinem animi præcipue, visa est ideò ostentare, quod παιδας καὶ γάμος † posthaberet gloriæ nominis sempiternæ. Verùm enimverò eidem virginī, cūm ab amicis et parentibus longissimè semota, patriam reviſendi spem omnem abjecisset, vitāmque deḡeret inter barbaros, imò ἀνθρωποκτόνες, mæſtissimam; huic, inquam miseriārum, quibus angebatur, multarum summa videbatur in eo posita fuisse, quod è vitā esset, non ἀπολις ſolūm καὶ ἄφιλος, verūm etiam ἄγαμος καὶ ἄτεκνος ‡, disceſſura—Haud abſimilem videamus fuisse parentūm ſolicitudinem, ut filiæ nuptum collocentur ||. Inter varia rei hujſce exempla, unum tantummodo proferam, et illud quidem patris, virgines, quas ipſius

et

* Orest. 1047.

† Iph. in Aul. 1409.

‡ Iph. Taur. 220.

|| Iph. in Aul. 626, 630. Alceſt. 320.

error nuptiarum spe privavisset, acerbissimè deplorantis.

'Αλλ' ήνίκ' ῥώ δὴ πρὸς γάμων ἵκητ' αἰγαῖς,
τίς έτος ἔσαι; — — —
— — — κατὰ τίς γαμεῖ;
οὐκ ἔσιν εὔδεις, ὡς τέκνον· ἀλλὰ δηλαδὴ
χέρσες φθαρῆναι καύγάμυς ὑμᾶς χρεών †.

QUIN

* CEd. Tyr. 1492. 1500.—Monendus est lector de sensu τῆς φθαρῆναι. “φθείρεσθαι,” inquit Brunckius, “significat πλανᾶσθαι, quod ipse CEdipus statim ostendit, quām quartū pōst versu subjicit μή σφε περιπόης ἀλωμένας. Hoc sensu occurrit φθείρεσθαι apud Euripidis Helenam,

— — — πόσσον χρόνον
πάντα πὶ νάτοις ἄλιον ἐφθείρει πλάνον; 783.

In Electrä, 234. ἔχειν νομίζων φθείρεται πόλεως νόμον.
et passim. Vid. Abresch. ad Aeschylum, p. 207. et nos ad Comici Concion. 284.” Vid. Brunck. ad loc. Conferas Eurip. Androm. 709. 716.

Notandum est etiam, vocem illam apud pedestres Scriptores eundem sensum habere. Sic enim scribit Demosthenes in Orat. πρὸς τὴν Φιλίππην ἐπιτόλην. Οἱ δὲ εὖδεν δέονται καταλιπόντες οἴκους, τέκνα, γυνεῖς, γυναικας, φθείρεσθαι, καὶ καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν κινδυνέειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν. Edit. Allen. Tom. I. p. 165.

Legimus in Appiani Roman. Hist. Praefatione, cap. x. φθαρέντων εἰς ἀλλήλας· quem ad locum celeberrimus Schweighäuser ita scribit. “φθείρεσθαι εἰς ἀλλήλας, eodem modo dicitur, ut alibi συντρίβεσθαι εἰς ἀλλήλας. Civ. iii. 499, 70. quo pacto φθείρεσθαι πρὸς τὰς πλευρὰς apud Demosth. (contra Midiam, Tom. I. p. 560. Ed. Reisk.) scitè Reiskius in Ind. interpretatus est cum contentione, quasi certatim, concurrere, ruere, ferri ad divites, ad horum divitium fraudem pestemque. Et generatim φθείρεσθαι Atticis scriptoribus (quorum utique stylum æmulatus Appianus est) significat ire, vagari, concurrere in suam vel aliorum perniciem.” Schweigh. ad Appian. Tom. III. p. 333.

QUIN et civilia apud varias gentes instituta abundè evincunt habitum fuisse summum matronis honorem, vetantque ne mireremur virgines nuptiarum desiderio deperisse. Ne quis autem, cùm adduxerim virgines paullò ante mortem ἐπὶ τὰ παρθένια plangentes, caussam ideò meam infirmare me opinetur! Evidem fateor illas, cùm mox obituræ essent, hos questus edidisse. An verò credibile est, easdem fore leviore perfusas tristitiâ quod ἄγαμοι essent et ἀτεκνοι, si perpetuæ virginitati fuissent devotæ? Cùm virgines mortem obituræ essent, et si ad omnia, quæ ex omni parte ingruebant, mala animum advertebant; at virginitatem tamen potius quam mortem ipsam lugere videbantur. Hæc igitur quæ dixi clarè plenèque ostendunt, virginitatem, cui Jephthæ filia devota esset, satè in causa fuisse curægritudine gravi turbaretur, multumque (ut sunt mulieres timidæ imbecillésque) et diu ejularet. Huc accedit, quod in Sacra Historiâ minimè traditum est, Virginem hancce ob aliud ullum, præter id unum et quidem insigne, quod memoravi, malum fuisse lamentatam. Virgines, quarum in Græcis fabulis mentio facta est, ideo luxerunt, cùm quod morituræ, tūm quod cœlibes

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essent:

essent: Jephthæ autem filia id tantummodo deplorat, quod die nuptiali esset caritura. Illud insuper est silentio minimè prætereundum, Jephthæ filiam ad lamentandam virginitatem temporis quoddam spatium petiisse. Quorsum autem tantum temporis valeret, si ad mortem esset destinata? Si quod homini infortunium accidit, de quo, nem multos sit aut etiam paucos per annos duraturum, pertimescendum sit, aliquantulum is necesse est temporis infumat, quo naturam mali examinet, modumque ejus vel perfundi vel levandi ediscat. Amicorum aut liberorum amissio, à prosperis rebus præceps fortunæ immutatio, membrorum ob valetudinem minimè sanam privatio, moræ non nihil requirunt, in quâ molestiis diuturnioribus, quæ subito devorari nequeant, paullatim concoquendis mens se se assuefaciat. Profecto in animo perinde ac corpore ita evenire solet, ut onus, quod impetu uno nobis impositum vires nostras infringat ac debilitet, idem, si sensim et gradatim imponatur, levius ad sustinendum fiat.—Longè alia sive metus sive doloris ratio est, quoties immaturus et penè violentus interitus, quem effugere quispiam nequeat, adesse atque impendere ei videtur. Spes enim vivendi cum omnino

omnino omnis evanescit, mors quodammodo ipsa minus in se acerbitatis habere, quam "mora mortis *," plerumque existimatur.

Ita comparata est hominum natura, ut possessiones, quae incertae caducæque sint, aut vi quadam necessitatis aliò abituræ, vehementius ii amplectantur. Solent prætereà animi mulierum impetu cupiditatum suarum temerè æstuare, et levi quovis momento huc atque illuc flecti dividique. Jephthæ igitur filiæ, si re verâ moritura esset, potuit in mentem venire ὄμηλικῆς περιγνθέος †—potuit ei Solis lux alma, quam brevi haud aspectura esset, dulcius ad intundendum

* Ovid. Epist. Ariadn. v. 84.

† Tale quiddam videtur Medeæ contigisse, cùm de se interficiendâ cogaret, et foramen arcuæ letalis aperuisset.

'Η, καὶ Φωριαμὸν μετεκίαθεν, οὐτὶς τολλά
Φάρμακά οἱ, τὰ μὲν ἐθλὰ, τὰ δὲ χαιτήρια, ἔκειτο.
'Ενθεμένη δὲ ἐπὶ γένατ' ὁδύρετο· δευτεροῦ δὲ κόλπους
"Αλληκτον διχεύοισι, τὰ δὲ ἕξεην αἰσχύλες κύτους,
"Αινούς ὀλοφυρομένης τὸν ἐὸν μόρον. Τέτο δὲ οὐκείς
Φάρμακα λέξαθας Θυμοφθόρα, ὅφρα τάσσαιτο.
"Ηδὴ καὶ δεσμεῖς ἀνελύετο Φωριαμοῖο,
"Εξελέειν μεματᾶ δυσάμμορος. ἀλλά οἱ ἄφων
Δεῖμος ὀλὸν συγεροῦ κατὰ φένυκς ἥλθε· Αἴδηο.
"Εσχετο δὲ ἀμφασίη δηρὸν χρέον, ἀμφὶ δὲ τάσσαι
Θυμηδεῖς βιότεο μεληδόνες ἴνδιάλλοντο.
Μινύσατο μὲν τερπνῶν, ὅστις ἐν ζωοῖσι πέλοντας,
Μινύσαθ' ὄμηλικῆς περιγνθέος, εἴλα τε κέρη·
Καὶ τέ οἱ ιέλιος γλυκίων γένεται εἰσοράσθας
"Η τάξος, εἰς ἐτεῖν γε νόῳ ἵπεμαίθεις ἔκαστα.

Apollon. Rhod. Lib. III. 802.

endum nitescere—res denique omnes, quæ juvenilibus animis gratæ sunt, leto jam instantे, multo gratiōres fieri potuerunt. Illud etiam credibile est, Virginem, quæ se ad necem esse destinatam sentiret, voluisse inter lacrymas comitum suarum dilectissimārū blandis suæ ægrimoniacæ alloquiis paullisper frui : et quicquid sibi in κειμηλίοις suis olim pretiosissimum fuisset, defixis oculis supremūm contemplari *. Verūm enim verò à sensibus et moribus humanis prorsùs abhorret, ut per duos solidos menses ea de industriâ faceret vel pateretur, quibus facundis vel patiendis paucæ horæ suffecissent. Quicquid à patre suo fuerat in Dei honorem de se ipsâ statutum, illud probè nōrat ratum et fixum futurum, quām quod maximè. Sibi igitur si moriendum esset, nihil ei debebat optabilius videri, quām ut malo, quod ipsi ultimum et acerbissimum instaret, morā vix ullā interpositā, defungeatur.—Itaque Jephthæ filia, si Virginitati esset devota, recte et prudenter spatiū temporis petiit, in quo Virginitatem plangeret ; in

* Sic de Elisâ, cùm “cœptis immanibus effera, et pallida morte futurâ” esset, pulcerrimè scribit Virgilius :

Hic, postquām Iliacas vestes notūmque cubile
Confexit, *paullūm lacrymis et mente morata,*
Incubuitque toro, dixitque novissima verba :
“ Dulces exuviae, &c.

Aen. IV. 648.

in quo solita vitæ gaudia et gaudiorum comites lentè et pedetentim relinqueret; in quo à pristinâ vivendi consuetudine, tanquam à lacte, paullatim depulsa nova illa, ut ita dicam, alimenta non nimiùm formidaret et aufugeret. Sin autem morti fuisset destinata, nulla satìs idonea reddi potest ratio, cur duos rogaret menses, idque porrò non ut mortem sed virginitatem lugeret.

Quæ cùm ita sint, satìs proculdubio caussæ nobis apparebit, cur et Jephtha et filia ejus tanto mœrore afficerentur: siquidem hæc expers mariti omnes illos honores et gaudia amisit, quibus matronæ fruerentur; ille est familiæ ulteriùs prorogandæ spe defititus, et unicam filiam gravissimo vidiit oppreslām infortunio.

Hæc itaque si quis reputaverit, satìs, arbitror, tribus illis argumentis responsum credet, quæ nostras contra partes potissimum steterint: neque ab adversariis, quod sciam, aliquid ultrà objectum est, in quo refellendo operæ pretium sit me diutiùs immorari. Nihil igitur restat, quàm ut locum huncce facri Scriptoris, prout res ipsa se nobis auctorem præstat, et Hebraici textûs verba postulant, accipiamus. Id saltem maximoperè cavendum est, ne ratas Interpretationis leges et

et perspectas Critices normas ita transgredi-amur, ut Historici verba ad eum sensum detorqueamus, qui, cùm viros sapientes et pios vehementissimè offendat, tūm Infidelium captiunculis atque irrisione augustum illud et venerandum Religionis nomen objiciat *.

* Quoniam permultūm valere existimata est quorundam Scriptorum auctoritas, in primis Judæorum, qui in alia omnia de hâc quæstione pedibus iverunt, minimè à me prætermit-tenda videtur Davidis Kimchi sententia, uti à doctissimo viro, Joanne Marshamo, profertur.

“Alii interpretantur” (nempè in Jud. xi. 31.) “et pro aut, ut disjunctivi vim habeat; quasi dixisset, *Erit Domino consecratum, si non sit idoneum holocausto; aut offeram in holocaustum, si fuerit holocausto idoneum.*” Sic et sumitur pro aut in Lege, Qui percusserit patrem et matrem: Atque hæc interpre-tatio pulcra est. Jephthæ occurrit filia unica; et fecit sicut vorerat, id est, fecit ei domum, et introduxit in eam, atque ibi manxit seclusa à filiis hominum et à rebus secularibus. Atque statutum est in Israël, ut quotannis eam inviserent Israëlitides. Pater præ dolore vestimenta laceravit, quod nulla prolis ex filiâ fulciriendæ spes esset reliqua.” Vid. Canon. Chronic. p. 170. Franequer. 1696.

Quæ doctissimus Kimchi dixit de vitâ cœlibe in loco, qui à mundanis rebus longè sejunetus esset, peragendâ, in men-tem mihi revocant aliud eorum perfugium, qui contendunt Jephthæ filiam esse pro victimâ oblatam. Aiunt nimirūm, neque per tribum ejus, neque per sexum, ei licuisse sacris ministeriis unquam ullis operam dare. Nemini enim, nisi maribus qui è tribu Levi essent oriundi, res ad divinum cul-tum pertinentes administrare concessum fuisse *. Respondeo igitur,

1^{mo}. Πρόελημα, quod in controversiam venit, non eò spec-tare, sítne Jephthæ filia, nécne, defuncta officio aliquo quod cum sacerdotii jure conjunctum esset;—sed in hoc tanquam cardine versari, utrūm patris votum per immolationem Vir-ginis, an per cœlibem ejus vitam fixum ratumque steterit. Verissimum autem judico, tūm ex lege Mosis, tūm ex Sacrae Scripturæ

* Vid. Jenningsi Antiquit. Judaic. Tom. I. p. 61.

Scripturæ verbis disertis in h. l. ad aras Jehovæ eam non fuisse trucidatam; sed eâ tantummodo necessitate astrictam, ut nemini in matrimonium traderetur. Quicquid est ultrà, cùm fileant de eo Sacri Scriptores à conjecturis, non probationibus, necesse est pendeat. Me tamen fateor calculum meum adjicere viris benè multis atque eruditis, qui putant haudquam esse vero ab simile, virginem nostram Summo Sacerdoti in servitutem fuisse addictam, atque adeò nonnullis rebus ad Dei cultum pertinentibus studium quoddam impendisse.

2^{do}. Illud adversarios velim rogatos, Summo Sacerdoti licuerit, nécne, famulas Israélitas è quâvis tribu conducere, atque etiam mancipia ab externis gentibus coëmpta possidere? Profectò, horum ministeria quò minùs in usus suos adhiberent, ut sacerdotibus interdictum sit, tantùm abest, ut mercenariorum et mancipiorum, quorum opere uti deberent, mentio disertè facta sit in libro Levitici. “Omnis alienigena non comedet de sanctificatis, iniquilinus sacerdotis et mercenarius non vescetur ex eis. Quem autem sacerdos emerit, et qui vernaculus domùs ejus fuerit, hi comedent ex eis.” cap. xxii. comm. 10, 11.

Genera officiorum, in quibus credibile fit mercenarios istiusmodi versari, recensuit Clericus: “exempli caufâ, in “molendo tritico, undè fierent panes facri, in pinsendâ farinâ, “coquendis panibus, vestibus nendis ac texendis, aliisque id “genus ministeriis, quibus apta esse poterat puella.” ad v. 39. — Minimè hæc videntur munera illius esse generis, ut à nemine perfici possent, nisi ab eo qui de prosapiâ Levitarum esset. Idcircò ea cum sacris rebus aliquam cognitionem habuisse videri poterant, quòd in usum Summi Pontificis præstata fuerint. Quò autem plus laboris vel fœditatis in conditione Virginis esset, eò pleniùs voto suo se satisfecisse pater ejus arbitrari debuit.

Ut hæc sunt, Jephthæ filia vitam cœlibem agere potuit, licet à rebus sacrī peragendis omnino abstineret.

Quod ad eos attinet, qui existimant, legem Mosaicam pariter violatam esse, seu quis filiam suam virginitati perpetuæ devovisset, seu immolandam tradidisset sacerdoti, eorum profectò argumenta è libellis Stoicorum, quibus peccata ferē paria esse placuerit, potius quàm ex præceptis Mosaicis de-prompta esse crediderim.

Tandem verò ad Marshamum redeamus. In interpretando illo Levitici loco (scil. xxvii. 28, 29.) neutiquā pari judicio, ut

ut mihi videtur, rem gessit vir ille eruditus. Scilicet Ῥ
 Ὅρη cum quibusdam doctis viris, de eo, “quicquid jure
 Belli internecioni devotum,” interpretatur. pag. 169. Junius
 contrà et Tremellius *bestiam* vertunt; idque, me saltēm judice,
 omnino recte; modò per *bestiam*, ea, quæ munda sit ideoque
 holocausto idonea, intelligatur.

FINIS.





